LIFE, CHARACTER, AND INFLUENCE OF DESIDERIUS ERASMUS OF ROTTERDAM

By

JOHN JOSEPH MANGAN

TWO VOLUMES

Life, Character, and Influence of Desiderius ERASMUS

Of Rotterdam

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TWO VOLUMES

Here is a new interpretation of the life and character of one of the most pathetic figures in history. It shows a full mastery of the materials and a grasp of the subject that can come only from a life of study devoted to one subject.

Dr. Mangan's analysis of the character of Erasmus derives much of its penetration from his knowledge of pathology and psychology. He does not force his evidence but allows the documents to speak for themselves. Though he has stripped from the character of Erasmus the sentimental grandeur in which it has usually been obscured, it is likely that the Erasmus described in these pages will appear greater and more impressive because of his triumphs over circumstance and temperamental weakness.

This work will no doubt become a landmark in Erasmian literature. It does not close the subject, but the pronouncedly modern tone of the criticism employed ought to add much to its attractiveness for present-day readers. It is well-written history that for all its length holds the reader's attention to the end. It cannot help but stimulate fresh efforts to understand the whole great movement of the sixteenth century.

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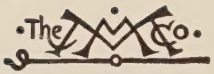

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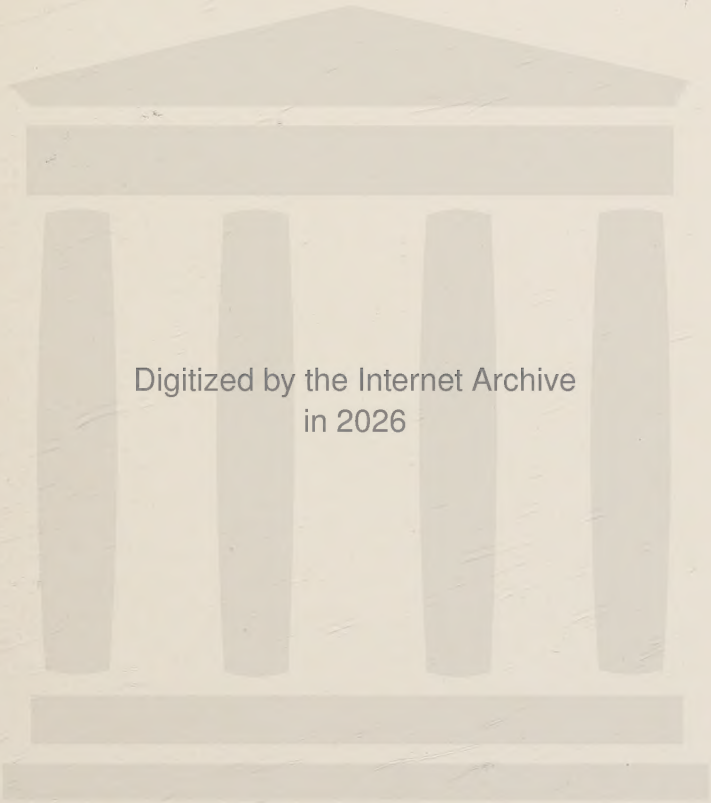
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DESIDERIUS ERASMUS

Dürer

LIFE, CHARACTER & INFLUENCE
of
DESIDERIUS ERASMUS OF ROTTERDAM

Derived from a Study of His Works and Correspondence

BY

JOHN JOSEPH MANGAN, A.M., M.D.

VOLUME TWO

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CHAPTER I

THE "NOVVM TESTAMENTVM"

We now enter upon the year 1516. In February the *New Testament* was issued from the press of Froben, and it is incumbent upon us here to subject this work, which had cost Erasmus so much labor and anxiety, to a reasonable scrutiny. The text of the New Testament which had been universally recognized by the Church since about the year 620 was the text given to it by St. Jerome two hundred years earlier, and was known as the *Latin Vulgate.* Still earlier than this there was a translation dating probably from the middle of the second century and used until Jerome's appeared, known as the *Vetus Itala,* in contradistinction to the *Vetus Latina.* This latter text had been used throughout the entire Church as at that time constituted, which embraced portions of Spain, the parts of Gaul bordering on Italy, certain regions of northern Africa, besides the churches of Asia Minor. As a consequence of this, many foreign, archaic, and provincial expressions had crept into the various copies of the Scriptures in use in these widely scattered localities, so that Italy, where a higher degree of culture prevailed, was not pleased with this version, and the *Vetus Itala* was gradually substituted for the *Vetus Latina.* In the former, however, the Old Testament translation had been made, not from the Hebrew, but from the Septuagint or Alexandrine version, which was the ancient Greek translation in use at the time of Christ. Besides the *Vetus Itala,* Origen gives in his *Hexapla* partial translations executed by Aquila, Theodotion, and Symmachus. But no text could long remain stable, due to errors of copyists and imperfect knowledge of the Greek and Hebrew languages; so that in St. Jerome's time (330- or 342-420) there were so many discrepancies, both of text and translation, that he set himself to make a thorough revision and translation of the entire Scriptures, basing his work on a profound study of the text as found in the original Hebrew and Greek tongues. How well fitted he was for the task a brief survey of his equipment will show. He was born of Christian parents in the Roman province of Illyrium, and studied first under his father, after which he

went to Rome and placed himself under the tuition of Aelius Donatus, who taught him Greek, rhetoric, and philosophy. Later on in life he traveled to the East, meeting on the way many saintly and celebrated men, among them St. Gregory Nazianzen at Constantinople. In 379 he was ordained priest at Antioch, and on account of the schism of Miletius of that city, he was sent to Rome to represent the matter to Pope Damasus, who was so pleased with his learning and eloquence that he retained him as his secretary. Already for many years he had devoted his attention to the matter of revising the Sacred Writings, and he finally went to the Holy Land, eventually fixing his residence at Bethlehem in 386 as head of the new monastery founded for him by St. Paula. Here, far removed from the noise of the world, he pursued the great literary work of his life, devoting himself especially to the study of Hebrew, without which he well knew no solid progress could be made in the translation of the Scriptures. This shows his peculiar fitness for the task he had set himself, that the three languages which were involved in the Scriptures were at his entire command, since Latin was his mother tongue, Greek had been taught him by Donatus during his residence at Antioch, the greatest of Greek cities at that time outside of Constantinople, and Hebrew he had mastered among the Rabbinical scholars of the Holy Land. But so careful has the Church been in all ages to scrutinize thoroughly any work dealing with the integrity of the Bible, that even St. Jerome experienced great difficulty in escaping the charge of heresy. Rufinus openly accused him of falsifying the meaning of certain texts, and even St. Augustine for a time had his doubts. Eventually the *Vulgate,* as St. Jerome's translation was finally named, became the universally received version of the Church; but very gradually, so that it was only under Gregory the Great that it received the papal sanction, after its author had been dead almost two hundred years.

But in all the centuries preceding the age of printing, owing to the frailty of human nature, there crept into the various copies which were multiplied by the monks to serve their needs unfortunate errors; and in this way the texts of many copies became corrupt in some small detail or other. The wonder is, however, not that there were errors in the copying of the Scriptures, but that they were practically of little importance, since they did not in any case change the sense. Nearly fourteen hundred manuscripts of the New Testament still remain in existence, yielding to exhaustive research nearly one hundred and fifty variations, but, with one or two exceptions, showing no material difference. This wonderful fact has been attributed to the general Christian consciousness, which has sedulously though silently watched over the integrity of the Sacred Writings and has saved them from the chances of time and circumstance. The Church was ever mindful of its duty to guard them unimpaired; and we find Alcuin appealing to Charlemagne to give him the necessary faculties of money and authority to collect the various copies of note throughout the empire and to revise them by comparing them with the original and more ancient codices. So, too, we find Archbishop Lanfranc of Canterbury in the eleventh

century, and Cardinal Nicholaus in the twelfth, complaining of the corruptions in the text and trying their best to bring order out of chaos. But the vitiation of the text went on, until the Council of Trent in 1546 declared the *Latin Vulgate* the authorized version of the Roman Catholic Church, and made the necessary arrangements for the issue of an officially sanctioned edition. Several editions were issued for this purpose, but none was satisfactory until, in 1593, under the pontificate of Clement VIII, an edition of the *Latin Vulgate* was sent forth which intensive scholarship declared to be as correct and as nearly like the wording of St. Jerome as it was humanly possible to make it. This edition has since remained the standard and accredited edition of the Roman Catholic Church.

Such being the condition of the Sacred Text at the time of which we have been treating, we may readily realize how tempting a field this was to the scholarly; but it would weary our readers too much even to mention the names of all those who essayed to do the work, which was eventually done in the Clementine edition spoken of above.[1] How Erasmus yielded to the attractiveness of the undertaking is competent to our subject, and we shall endeavor to describe it accordingly.

When he was in the monastery at Steyn, and rummaging through its stores of manuscripts, he ran across a copy of Laurentius Valla's *De elegantia Latini sermonis,* which charmed him to the degree that its author was ever afterwards one of his literary idols. Some time in 1503 or, possibly, 1504, he was in Louvain, when he was informed that in the Premonstratensian monastery of Parc there was a copy of Valla's *Annotationes in Nouum Testamentum.* Since this work had never been printed, he secured the loan of it, recopied it for the press, and issued it in 1505, as we have previously stated.[2] This is the work that first made him acquainted with the uncertainty of the *Vulgate* text after its vicissitudes of a thousand years, before the art of printing was discovered. Immediately all his instincts as a scholar were aroused, and he was seized with a desire to continue the task that Valla had begun, and to excel him in the result.

St. Jerome and Laurentius Valla were the two writers whose works mostly influenced and molded the literary character of Erasmus. But what a contrast there was between the two men: St. Jerome, the ascetic, the recluse, the lover of austerity and self-mortification, burning with zeal for the salvation of souls, but full of fear for the ultimate saving of his own, the friend of St. Gregory Nazianzen, St. Paulinus, and St. Pammachius, thoroughly learned but making humility the foundation of his literary pursuits and always manifesting proper diffidence in his own personal judgments; Valla, on the other hand, the voluptuary, the

[1] See Simon's *Histoires critiques des versions du Nouveau Testament* for exhaustive treatment. Now again, after some four hundred years, the Roman Catholic Church is undertaking another revision in the light of modern scholarship. The Book of Genesis is already complete; and by 1950, it is said, the Biblican Commission should have the complete text of St. Jerome's Latin version—freed from any existing errors. Until the work is completed, however, no change will be made in the familiar Vulgate now in use

[2] See Vol. I, p. 193.

hanger-on of kings and courts, epicurean in taste and inclination, self-seeking, irreverent, totally devoid of spirituality, and a man who rejoiced in the making of enemies. Both were learned, but Valla not nearly so much as St. Jerome; for, besides the fact that Valla knew no Hebrew, he had not the advantage of the slightest knowledge of Chaldaic and the other Eastern languages into which the Scriptures had been translated, as had St. Jerome. The saint was always conscious that he was liable to mistakes, which, early in his career, had made him cultivate caution and humility. Valla had the fatal pride in his accomplishments which too often betrays literary men into absurdity and error. The saint made his scholarship completely subservient to his object; Valla made of his the ostentatious show which marks the pedant. The former sought to convince for truth's sake; the latter, for the sake of victory. St. Jerome, like all saints, was penetrated with a sense of his own deficiencies; Valla had the self-sufficiency of opinion which scholars are easily prone to entertain. But the greatest point of difference between them was that, while St. Jerome's labors were meant to be helpful and constructive, those of Valla were destructive of cherished beliefs, directed not so much that the truth might be made manifest, as that his own cleverness might be displayed. All of which, in a word, goes to prove that Valla was no saint.

These two men, so different in almost every respect, had exerted a pull on Erasmus from opposite directions since his early days at Steyn. At various periods we can see the influence of first one and then the other preponderating. St. Jerome appealed to him as the highest, the holiest, and the noblest; Valla as the most attractive, fascinating, and appealing. It is related of St. Jerome, who in his youth was passionately fond of the profane authors, that he had a dream in which he seemed to be arraigned before Christ for judgment. He was asked his profession, and replied that he was a Christian. "Thou liest," said his judge, "thou art a Ciceronian, for the works of that author possess thy heart." Thereupon he was condemned to be scourged by angels, and the remembrance of the affair, after he awoke, was so vivid, and the impression left upon his mind so keen, that he decided to give up the reading of those authors and devote himself to the study and perusal of writings pertaining to God alone. Erasmus might have admired St. Jerome's resolution, but he himself could never have imitated him in it. It may, however, have so tinctured his thoughts that his own *Ciceronianus* was a result. No man who ever lived could better apply to himself those words of Medea in Ovid:

> video meliora proboque.
> Deteriora sequor.

We feel that at critical moments he must have reached out for help to St. Jerome, only to fall back the more decisively into the power of Valla. We know instinctively that St. Jerome is in the ascendant for the moment when we read these inspiring words from Erasmus' preface to the *New Testament*:

> So I beseech you, beloved reader, that you bring in turn pious ears and a Christian heart to the reading of this book. Let no man

take into his hands this work with the same feelings that he would take, perchance, the *Noctes* of Gellius or the *Miscellanea* of Politian, on which to exercise the force of his genius, the power of his eloquence, and his hidden erudition, as on a Lydian touchstone. We are engaged in a holy occupation, and in one which commends itself to the world by its especial purity and simplicity, and in which it would be ridiculous to wish ostentatiously to display human erudition or boastingly to indulge in human eloquence, which, indeed, if we possessed, it would be proper to dissemble, lest someone might rightly exclaim, "He is putting perfume in soup." In simple and pure zeal we are furnishing these Scriptures for Christian hearing so that in future more may make use of this sacrosanct philosophy, and all the more willingly that with less trouble they may realize more profit. May Christ Himself, who is our witness and helper in the work we have undertaken, look upon us with disfavor if we seek any emolument from our efforts, or if it be not true that we are knowingly and willingly going to incur a great and certain loss of money. Moreover, so far are we from being charmed with the sweetness of fame, that we would not even have put our name to the work had we not been fearful that the usefulness of the book might have been thereby lessened, since everyone regards an anonymous work with suspicion.[8]

Such language as this is redolent of St. Jerome; but, when we remember that the *Praise of Folly* came from the same hand, that in it he exercised not only his matchless literary powers but also injected into it his stored-up venom against the individuals and institutions by which he conceived he was being wronged, that he defaced the work with blasphemy and obscenity, that he was even at the present moment storing up in his mind the material that was later to soil the otherwise incomparable *Colloquies* and render them unfit to be used by tender youth without a previous expurgation, then indeed we feel the influence not of St. Jerome, but of Valla. All his life he strove to reach the spiritual heights, only to fall constantly back into the material depths. It is an appalling thing that this man, who wrote some of the finest works the world ever saw and dedicated them to God's honor and glory, should have paved the way for Rabelais' unutterable filthiness by setting him the example.

He had abundant reason, however, to be proud of his Greek edition of the New Testament, the result of years of work and study, another proof to the learned world of his high scholarship and, at the same time, of a laudable effort to stabilize the text of that part of the Scriptures most closely related to the Christian dispensation. That he did not succeed in substituting his Latin translation for that of the *Vulgate* need not surprise us. This was not due to any organized opposition on the part of other scholars, nor to the machinations of his enemies. All men, when not moved by passion or prejudice, are conservative in matters pertaining to religion. They change unwillingly, and the necessity for the change is borne in on them very slowly. Also, they cling instinc-

[8] Eras. Ep. 373, ll. 202-21.

tively to old thoughts, old ideas, and even old traditions, with a tenacity which is as noticeable as it is surprising; and not always does the offer of something superlatively better serve to win them to the newer but stranger substitute.[4]

So, if his Latin translation did not eventually displace the *Vulgate,* he might, if he chose, derive some little satisfaction from the knowledge that it was no less a man than St. Jerome who had defeated him. One of the first copies off the press he sent to Cardinal Wolsey, in an attempt to win the interest of that worldly prelate to himself: "The *New Testament,*" he had told him earlier, "is being printed in Greek as it was written by the Apostles, and in Latin as translated by myself, together with my own annotations." [5]

Another copy he sent to Colet, with a letter which is unfortunately lost. Colet in his answer says:

> I understand what you say about the *New Testament.* The copies of this new edition of yours are bought with avidity and read everywhere, with many approving and admiring your work, others disapproving and finding fault with it, and saying the very things that Martin Dorp wrote to you in his epistle.[6]

The venerable Archbishop Warham, with the caution which was due to his position, on receipt of his copy, wrote as follows:

> I have handed over your edition of the *New Testament* to several of my brother bishops and doctors of theology, who say with one accord that you have done a work exceedingly well that was well worth doing. Relying on their judgment, and deeming everything that proceeds from your divine genius and multifarious knowledge to be the very best possible, I extol this work of yours with every kind of praise, as well as your revision of Jerome which you have so nearly completed. By these labors you will earn an immortality of fame amongst men, a divine reward amongst the saints above, and from myself whatever I can properly and conveniently bestow.[7]

France had a Greek scholar who was perhaps superior to Erasmus in that language: William Budé. In the first edition of his *New Testa-*

[4] We have observed a case of this kind in our own day when in 1870 a company of eminent scholars and clergymen of the Church of England, aided by a similar body in America, started to revise for public use the old King James Version, which had been the standard translation of the Scriptures for English-speaking people since 1611. The revision was thorough and scholarly, and occupied the committee fourteen years. When this new translation was given to the public it looked so strange, especially in the absence of verses, since paragraphs had been substituted therefor, that it will only very slowly, if ever, win its way to the hearts of the people. Even among scholars it meets with mingled favor and criticism. But history is only repeating itself, for we know that the King James Version did not gain general acceptance for nearly a half century after its completion. So, if this version, the result of so many years of labor and combined study of so many scholars in both countries, has been so slow in displacing the old familiar translation, we need not be surprised if we note that the work of Erasmus experienced similar difficulties, and finally failed altogether to make a place for itself in the hearts of either the educated few or the uneducated multitude.

[5] Eras. Ep. 348. [6] *Ibid.,* 423. [7] *Ibid.,* 425.

ment, Erasmus finds fault with the meaning which Budé had given to the Greek word παρακολουθηκότι in the gospel of Luke i. 3. Like all really proficient scholars, Budé acknowledged his mistake, and was so far from being resentful that he even thanked Erasmus for setting him right and proceeded to bring forward further Greek quotations against himself. Together they labored to give a better translation of this verse; and in the second edition Erasmus omitted all reference to Budé's mistake. On the other hand, Budé criticized some of the annotations to the work, something which Erasmus did not relish at all, seeing which, and observing that Erasmus was becoming testy on the subject, Budé, in order to relieve the tension, withdrew his remark about "fine-spun arguments" as referring to the *New Testament,* and said that he was only referring to some of Erasmus' minor writings which, he frankly told him, would appear to posterity to have been falsely labeled, inasmuch as they smacked more of Erasmus than of their own title. Erasmus dissented vigorously and went on at great length to free himself from Budé's criticism, eliciting in return from Budé the following remark, which possibly contains considerable truth: "When I have heard others talking of them [your works], I have sometimes said that I missed in Erasmus a mind content with what is enough, since you had not been satisfied with being a man of much learning, but you must also be a man of much writing." [8]

What Budé was alluding to here is not hard to guess. He was referring to the fact that Erasmus had not been satisfied to give an admirable Greek edition of the New Testament, considering his handicaps, and accompanying it with a fairly accurate Latin translation, but had added annotations of his own which might have been valuable for the understanding of the Sacred Text had he stopped there. But, as we have so often seen before, he could not refrain from injecting into these annotations his own personality; and, as a consequence, where we look for serious and dignified comment on the form and spirit of the text, we often find puerile and silly remarks on subjects that can by no stretch of the imagination be connected with a Greek edition of the New Testament. Lest this last statement may seem unwarranted, we will quote Drummond on this same point:

> But the notes on the New Testament were by no means confined to questions of textual criticism. There was other matter in them which was sure to give offence, and which might seem to have been introduced on purpose to offend. They were made the vehicle, perhaps to an unwarrantable extent, for conveying the opinions of the writer upon the manners of the time, and especially for uttering sarcastic allusions to the various abuses which prevailed in the Church. In fact, the *Encomium Moriæ* was here repeated, only in a somewhat more serious form. And on many points—for example, on the dress of the priests and the ceremonies observed in public worship, on fasts and feasts, on the monastic life, on vows, penance, the worship of relics, on marriage and divorce,—opinions were expressed which, if they were not at variance with the authorized

[8] *Ibid.,* 435.

doctrines of the Church, were at all events in direct conflict with popular ideas, and with the teachings and practice of the most zealous upholders of the ecclesiastical system.[9]

It may be assumed we are interested enough to give to Erasmus all the credit for literary achievement that is truly his. Much as we admire Drummond's work on Erasmus for its fine literary flavor, we cannot agree with him in ascribing to Erasmus more praise in the matter of getting out an early edition of the Greek New Testament than his deserts warrant. He asserts that, at the time Erasmus undertook to edit the New Testament in Greek, such was the ignorance of the monks that many of them did not know that there was any Greek or Hebrew original of the accepted *Latin Vulgate*. Such statements have been repeated from generation to generation by those who are too indolent or too partial to look up the real facts and print them, whether they make for or against their preconceived ideas. We hold no brief for the monks, but these very letters of Erasmus which we are engaged in studying disprove all such general and misleading statements. Of the large body of his friends everywhere, probably the majority were learned monks; and in this very work of the Greek New Testament Drummond must have forgotten about Kuno of Nuremberg, the Dominican monk who assisted Erasmus in the work, and of whom he said that he was "a man eminently reliable and diligent in investigating the matters which pertained to the restoration of authors, and particularly deserving of a long life spent in the service of good literature." Drummond must have forgotten also what Beatus Rhenanus said of Kuno, that "he was almost more learned in Greek than in Latin, and versed in the best authors."[10] Drummond must also have forgotten that it was a Franciscan monk in the person of Cardinal Ximenes who had printed the New Testament in Greek even before Erasmus, although he was not ready to issue the complete Bible until 1522. Froben, the Basle printer, had heard of this coming edition, which was called the Complutensian from being printed at Alcalá in Spain (the Latin name of which is Complutum), and informing Erasmus of the fact, he hastened to anticipate it by issuing that of Erasmus in 1516. The great haste necessary to accomplish this was reflected in the many typographical and other errors with which the first edition of Erasmus' *Greek New Testament* abounds. The Complutensian Bible was in direct contrast to this, occupying from 1502 to 1517 in its execution, and was the

[9] *Op. cit.*, Vol. I, pp. 318-19.

[10] Allen has gone to the trouble of seeing what this monk really accomplished, and tells us that "he studied under Aldus and John of Crete at Venice, and under Marcus Musurus and Scipio Carteromachos at Padua. He was sent by Aldus in 1505 to request Maximilian's patronage for the Neacademia. He became an eminent Greek scholar, and in 1507 published at Padua a translation of Basil's *De diferentiis* οὐσίας καὶ ὑποστάσεως, dedicated to Jodocus Gallus. In 1511, or perhaps earlier, he came to Basle and worked for Amerbach's press, helping with *Jerome*, and teaching Amerbach's sons Bruno and Boniface, who were joined in August, 1511, by Beatus Rhenanus. He brought a number of Greek MSS. from Italy, and published a translation of Gregory of Nyssa's philosophical works dedicated to Beatus, and an oration of Gregory Nazianzen dedicated to Thomas Truchses, besides an unpublished translation from Chrysostom."

result of the leisurely work of the scholars whom Cardinal Ximenes had assembled in his newly established University of Alcalá. Leo X also gave this edition of the Scriptures his pontifical sanction when it was published in 1522, so between the two editions honors were equal. Ximenes' object in issuing the polyglot Bible was, as he says in his preface, "to revive the languishing study of the Sacred Scriptures." For this purpose he supplied his workers with the most accurate texts of the Hebrew, Greek, and Latin originals then available, even sending to the Vatican library for some of its more ancient codices. His Bible also gives the Chaldaic *Targum* of the Old Testament, with an interlinear translation of the Greek version. The work was issued in six large volumes, the last volume containing also a Hebrew-Chaldaic dictionary, a Greek dictionary, and a Hebrew grammar. This great man was born in Spain in 1436, and died there in 1517, before he had the pleasure of seeing his monumental work in print. He was educated at the University of Salamanca and, having taken his degree of Doctor in canon and civil law, he went to Rome to practice his profession at the pontifical court. We note, in passing, the coincidence that another Spaniard was a prominent member of the Roman Curia at that particular period who was destined to bring eternal shame and reproach on the Church, of which he was later the unworthy head when he became Pope Alexander VI. Nevertheless, we may properly doubt that Rome was the sink of iniquity that some writers unctuously delight to enlarge upon. One man alone could darken the perspective of an entire century if he happened to be Pope, and that is what happened in the case of Alexander VI. Ximenes left Rome and went back to Spain, not to rail at the corruption which existed at the Roman court, but to enter a Franciscan monastery. There his piety, his love of learning, and his executive ability, were such that he was promoted from office to office in the Church, until at last he was advanced to the dignity of the cardinalate. He was loath to leave his humble cell and only under compulsion did he accept office at all. He was once reprehended by the Pope for dispensing with the external trappings of his cardinalitial rank, but would only consent to wear even the episcopal dress in such a way that the friar's habit underneath might remain visible. This is in such strong contrast to Erasmus that we feel it worthy of mention. Erasmus' action in the matter of his habit vividly reminds us of Jovinian, and Jovinian must have been well know to him, since it is St. Jerome who has handed down the anecdote. Jovinian had spent his youth in a monastery, where he had subjected his body to fasting, manual labor, and other ascetic practices; but, having lost his pristine fervor, he went to the other extreme, becoming a freethinker and eventually adopting the heresy of Helvidius. He left his monastery and went to Rome, where he tried to spread his peculiar ideas. These may be reduced to four, of which the last was Erasmus' favorite belief, viz., that abstinence from certain meats is unprofitable. Jovinian became decidedly sensual in his way of living, and, throwing off his monk's habit, clothed himself in the finest of garments, ate sumptuously, and drank only delicate wines. We draw no comparisons amongst these three men, Erasmus, Jovinian, and

Ximenes; but the thought occurs to us that self-sacrifice is instinctive in us in all ages, creeds, and nations, as an expression of love for God, and that it is the lovers of sacrifice and not the lovers of delicate food and purple raiment who have accomplished whatever has been worth while in behalf of Christianity.

But it was not Christian scholars alone who had become interested in printing the Bible in its original tongues; for we see that the Jews also took advantage of the printing art to commit to cold and unvarying type the Hebrew text of the Old Testament. The first essay on their part was in 1477, but this embraced only a small portion of the Pentateuch. In 1488, however, they printed the entire text of all their received writings, and in a manner both thorough and creditable to their scholarship.

Hence we see that, contrary to the usual opinion, the ever-increasing attention which was being given to biblical studies was due entirely to the newly awakened desire for learning which had seized on the higher classes and which we call the Renaissance, and was not due to the Reformation, since Luther had not yet appeared on the scene. And to the printing-press must consequently be attributed this new interest in biblical study which entered in and underlay all the translations of the Sacred Scriptures which illustrated the sixteenth century. It is also a very general impression that Luther first translated the Bible into any modern language, but this impression is ill founded; for we find translations of the Sacred Scriptures into German, French, Dutch, Italian, and Bohemian, and all these translations made by writers before the year 1500, some of them before he was born, and the latest of them while he was yet a boy at Eisenach. So the statement of Drummond that "those who were interested in religion cared very little for learning, while most of those who were interested in learning cared not at all for religion," will not bear the scrutiny of modern investigation.[11]

Drummond gives some amusing instances of the inaccuracies of Erasmus in his *New Testament,* many of them being real blunders. A perusal of the work shows this to be very true; but we do not think this a very serious charge to be made against him as he was only human and corrected most of them in succeeding editions. However, what we cannot acquit him of is that, while admitting his errors generally, he defended them individually to the bitter end, and, in doing this, often used language that was, to say the least, undignified. Another peculiarity of his in the matter was to gauge the asperity of his retorts by the standing and reputation for scholarship of his antagonist. Thus to Budé or Faber Stapulensis he was gentleness itself, but woe betide the man of lesser reputation such as Lee or Stunica; there was no arrow in his well-filled quiver sufficiently piercing for such men.

Had he been content to write his *New Testament* from a purely scholarly point of view, we had been content to judge it from that same point of view. It would have been easy for him to do this, and the work would then have redounded to his eternal honor; but he allowed his prejudices to overrule his judgment. This was his fatal error, for,

[11] *Op. cit.,* Vol. I, p. 309.

in yielding to his hatred of monks and theologians, he recklessly removed his work from the domain of accurate scholarship where it properly belonged, to that of empty but angry polemics, where nothing but enmity was to be gained. And the wonder is, not that he made enemies by his attacks, but that there were left any of the monks or theologians who, for the sake of good scholarship, would forgive him his cutting aspersions on their class. But the number of such is surprising, when we take into account the littleness of human nature in general and the fact that Erasmus had no high rank either of birth, character, or station to warrant his assumption of the position of *censor morum* of his brethren. In the circumstances it was rash temerity on his part to anger them by flinging broadcast the epithets with which he loved to characterize them, and which hurt the more by reason of the modicum of truth they contained. It is true that there were ignorant monks; it is true there were badly equipped theologians; it is true there were followers of the scholastic philosophy who sometimes busied themselves with problems that were absurd and undignified; but all monks were not ignorant, all theologians were not uneducated, all followers of the scholastic system were not triflers, any more than all the lawyers, doctors, judges, preachers, teachers, and the various classes of men and women whom he caricatured in the *Praise of Folly* were the unnatural types he delighted to portray. If then Erasmus, not carelessly, but with set purpose, wounded the *amour propre* of such people by statements which were not only not true but were especially meant to wound, he could not rightly complain when they resented his ridicule with every possible means in their power. And now in the *New Testament* he had not only repeated the degrading and contemptuous epithets so noticeable in the *Praise of Folly,* but had furnished in this work a surer and more deadly weapon of offense; and at the same time that he had assailed them more publicly in his annotations to the *New Testament,* he laid himself open to their more or less justly aroused anger. In offering this great work to the world he had uncovered all his batteries and had shown those whom his indiscretion had alienated how to strike him in the most vital spot. The faults which he pointed out in the *Vulgate,* instead of serving some useful purpose, only created suspicion of his own orthodoxy, not because they held to a belief in the absolute inspiration of every word in the *Latin Vulgate,* as has often been charged, but because that version of the Scriptures had been accepted and reverenced as the official version of the Church for so many centuries. Thus the criticisms leveled against his version, while not perhaps always logical, were still very natural; for at a time when very few scholars could read Greek it need not surprise us that most men, whether of the clergy or the laity, preferred to cling to the version hallowed by time and consecrated by Church usage rather than to adopt the very first translation that might be offered to them. As a consequence, when they saw what they considered to be attacks on the integrity of the Bible made by this irreverent and iconoclastic Dutchman, they defended it with reason, and sometimes without reason, for to them it was a case of "fearing the Greeks bearing gifts."

This was not confined to the unlettered, whom Erasmus never deigned to notice, but chiefly excited the learned. The warning of Dorp had been in vain, and the first man who attacked his work on the New Testament was a dear friend, James Le Fèvre of Etaples, or, as he was better known to scholars, Faber Stapulensis. The friendship between them had been formed years before, while Erasmus was at Paris; and, although Faber was many years older than he, there subsisted a bond of friendship between them based on similarity of tastes, which made the younger man very tender of the feelings of Faber. It is possible that the reason for this lay in some sentimental association of ideas, for Faber, like himself, was of illegitimate birth, which had proved a bar to his preferment. France was quite as unjust and devoid of pity for these unfortunates as other nations, and no man could be promoted to benefices in the Church nor take a Doctor's degree in the University if he bore the bar sinister. On account of some connection, either of blood or patronage, Faber was much helped by the Briçonnet family, one member of which was William Briçonnet, Cardinal of St. Malo (Meaux), and another the Superior of the Benedictine monastery of St. Germain des Prés. Although not a monk himself he made his home in this monastery for many years, and from it issued most of his writings. He was a well-trained Latin and Greek scholar, having studied under some of the best teachers of Italy, and at the University of Paris. In his simple abode in the monastery of St. Germain he had delved into patristic literature, and in 1508 had issued his *Psalterium quintuplex,* followed in 1512 by his *Commentary on the Epistles of St. Paul,* and several similar works later on. Erasmus, who had differed from some of the views expressed by Faber in his work on the Scriptures, was much surprised to see the latter attack him with acerbity for the translation which Erasmus had made of the words Ἠλάττωσας αὐτὸν βραχύ τι παρ' ἀγγέλους which occur in St. Paul, Hebrews, iii. 7. The Vulgate version of this is *Minuisti eum paulóminus ab angelis,* which Erasmus changed to *Fecisti eum paululo inferiorem angelis.* We need not go into the matter involved, but we feel that we should insert Erasmus' letter of appeal to Faber asking him not to force their differences to extremities, especially before a public which was perhaps not too friendly to either of them:

> My dear James Faber, best and most learned of friends. Already in two letters I have evidenced to you how regretfully I regard the opportunity given to slanderers of gossiping about us. I plainly foresaw that this evil would ensue. But, because it was out of my power not to reply, I have chosen the lesser of two evils, as it seems to me. Now that only one remains, I implore you by Christian charity, by our common love for sacred studies, by the good reputation of us both, which, according to the laws of friendship, it is our duty to hold most dear, that for our mutual affection we apply a remedy to this evil as much as we are able, lest the fire spread insidiously far and wide. You perceive that men who are prone to evil seize eagerly on the causes of such dissensions everywhere.

There is hardly a social gathering in which there is not a dispute, here in favor of Faber as against Erasmus, there in favor of Erasmus as against Faber, and especially among such are are completely ignorant of the matter at issue. Various reports are spread around in your behalf, some declaring that you are getting ready some recriminations, others denying this on the ground that you do not consider Erasmus worthy of a reply. Again some say that you do not hold it against me for defending myself, while others say, on the contrary, that you blame my temerity. As far as I myself am concerned, I do not much care whether you reply or not, provided that you abstain from the sort of hateful remarks which are unbecoming to you when directed at a friend, and which are out of my power to disregard. Moreover, it is unpleasant that on our account dissensions should be sowed amongst Christians, and that those should exult in our differences to whom our studies are displeasing. I do not ask you to retract, although I have been assailed in many ways; but only to testify, by some sort of a letter, that you are differing with me only out of a zeal for ascertaining the truth, and that between ourselves there exists entire concord of hearts. If you are not agreeable to this, I would prefer you to make a reply rather than to exasperate both sides by your silence, provided that you adopt that moderation of utterance which is in accord with your old time custom. No man has ever heard me speak of Faber except lovingly and honorably; and I confess I was much surprised that you could write such things against me, and marveled what were the reasons that induced you to do so. As Christ is my witness I am speaking just as I feel. Farewell, best of men. Louvain, April 17, 1518.[12]

Such a letter does honor to Erasmus and manifests a truly Christian spirit. However, Faber did not respond in kind, but kept a profound silence which disturbed Erasmus more than ever.

He continued to make enemies for himself to the last day of his life, some wittingly, others unwittingly; but he never failed to express surprise and regret whenever they showed him their more or less just resentment. This is characteristic of many people of neurasthenic tendencies—to expect from others a tolerance of speech and act that they are by no means willing to render in return, and to demand a strict observance of the courtesies of life to which they themselves are unwilling to conform. Louis Ber, also a particular friend of Erasmus, did not hesitate to tell him that he did not need to inject such asperity into his replies and so-called apologies, in which advice Ber was seconded by Budé, who thought it lamentable that two such men as Erasmus and Faber Stapulensis should use a style of writing against each other that could only give joy to the unregenerate. By the efforts of Budé they were eventually reconciled; but the old cordiality never quite returned.

John Eck of Ingolstadt, a fine scholar and finished theologian, also objected to some of the conclusions that Erasmus had inserted in his

[12] Eras. Ep. 814.

annotations, and wrote to him very courteously for a solution of his difficulties. Erasmus replied rather peevishly, and we can perceive that the reason for this was an access of his frequent suspicions of men and their motives. It appears from his letters that this was true of his feelings towards Eck, who, he thought, was prejudiced against him. It seems that one day in a company where Erasmus was present, Eck was speaking of a "certain learned man who in theology was a mere child." Erasmus immediately jumped to the conclusion that Eck was aiming at him, and assumed as a reason for Eck's remarks that Erasmus had not praised him sufficiently for his attainments. But Eck, who seems to have been a man of generous mind, wrote to Erasmus on hearing of the latter's amazing suspicion and assured him that, far from deeming him a child in theology, he always spoke of him as the most eloquent of theologians.

John Briard, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Louvain, perhaps better known by the title of Atensis, and one of those whom Erasmus thought to be behind Dorp in his criticism of the *Praise of Folly,* did not hesitate to appear in person as a critic of the New Testament in Erasmus' Latin version. They were very great friends hitherto, so much so that Erasmus, who was just then preparing for a second edition of the work, asked Briard his opinion of it. Now we have only Erasmus' side of the story and must regard what he says attentively, for men are at times self-deceived. He says that Briard read the first edition very closely and then assured him that he considered the work to be "pious, learned, and quite free from anything blameworthy." But, when the second edition appeared, Briard experienced a complete change of heart and proceeded to attack the work, an act which would certainly serve to stultify Briard's judgment, and does not seem plausible without explanations, which unfortunately are lacking. That he was not so unreasonable as this is shown by Erasmus' own action in the matter: for, instead of being angry, as he would have had good right to be under the circumstances, he was sufficiently convinced of the sincerity and good faith of Briard that he asked him specifically to name his objections. This Briard did, and suggested that Erasmus should make such explanations in future editions of the work as would remedy any scandal that might arise from what Briard had conceived to be indiscretions of statement or comment occurring in it. This Erasmus conceded, and so the incident was closed between them by a touching and sincere reconciliation brought about by their common friend Dorp. So strong was the reëstablished friendship that, when Erasmus was reported, some time after, to have brought back with him from Basle to Louvain the dreaded plague, and was in the utmost danger of death, Briard courageously went to visit him, bringing with him, we may assume, the spiritual consolation of the last rites of the Church. Shortly afterwards he himself died, and Erasmus expressed genuine regret.

CHAPTER II

THE "NOVVM TESTAMENTVM": QUARREL WITH LEE

But a far greater source of anxiety and annoyance to Erasmus was Edward Lee, a friend of More and of many other English acquaintances of Erasmus, who had dared to write against our subject. There seems to have grown up in England a party which looked with suspicion on a man who could utter the sort of statements about monks, divines, bishops and Popes, that Erasmus had sent forth in his *Praise of Folly;* not that some of these statements did not contain a germ of truth, but that they were so woefully exaggerated that the unthinking might legitimately infer from them that there were no longer any good monks, that sincere divines were remarkable by their absence, that bishops and Popes were men to be held in abhorrence. And, when they reflected upon the person who made these sweeping and indiscriminate charges, and thought of his own errors of commission and omission, his lack of all the qualities, save scholarship, that should characterize a self-appointed censor of the morals of others, of the fact that he was at that moment, and had for many years, been living on the bounty of several English bishops who overlooked his idiosyncrasies of character in consideration of his vast potentialities for the advancement of the cause of learning, they felt they were justified in judging his motives by his utterances, and in closely scrutinizing his writings as well as his conduct. We perceive from this time forward that, instead of adding to his many English well-wishers, he seems to have cooled the regard of many of those he already had. This is observable in the attitude of King Henry, Wolsey, and some others who will be mentioned in their proper place, and was in our estimation the essential cause of his eventually leaving England for good. Moreover, Luther had just startled the world by nailing up his ninety-five theses on the church door at Wittemberg, and hence it was a bad time for Erasmus, or anyone else, to advance what did not bear on its face all the earmarks of strict orthodoxy. The Catholic world was rent in twain, and dispassionate judgment no longer ruled the minds of men. Generation was to succeed generation and bitterness of feeling and prejudices were to be handed down from father to son, to the almost total destruction of Christian charity. Some of the earlier biographers of Erasmus, notably LeClerc and Knight, lived too near to the times of which we speak to write without some feeling natural under the circumstances; and Jortin, who was otherwise well fitted to write the life of Erasmus by virtue of his high scholarship and admirable industry, was totally unsuited for the task on account of his temperament and heredity. Now, unfortunately, these three writers seem to have dominated the

minds of all succeeding Erasmian biographers until we come to Professor Emerton's analytical study of Erasmus, in which he accepted their facts but entirely and rightly disregarded their logic. This was a wise departure, and the result shows us that the perfect Erasmus of LeClerc, Knight, and Jortin was neither so impeccable nor so invulnerable as they had represented him.

Now, though Lee was really no minor character in the history of the English Church of those days, Jortin seems to have spared no pains to discredit him as a critic of Erasmus, taking up their quarrel where Erasmus had laid it down, and exceeding Erasmus in the virulence with which he pursued this unsparing critic of his idol. Where Erasmus declared that "the world had never so far produced anything more arrogant, more virulent, or more foolish than Lee," Jortin did not think this strong enough and proceeded to translate the words Erasmus had used as follows: "The earth never produced an animal more vain, more arrogrant, more scurrilous, more ignorant, more foolish, and more malicious than he." [1]

Anthony Wood had declared Lee to have been "not only profoundly learned, and an incomparable divine; but a pious Christian, an able and assiduous preacher, extremely charitable to the poor, and universally lamented when he departed this life." Thereupon Jortin, with an indignant snort, says, "It is very well; but whence came our antiquaries to know all this? Why, even from his epitaph. As if stones could not exaggerate! Thus much is certain, that he was always an enemy to the Reformation." [2] And then he proceeds to weaken the testimonies of men whose sources of information as to this matter were indisputable. For instance, Sir Thomas More's great-grandson Cresacre More, and Thomas Stapleton, both testify that Lee was an excellent man. Jortin while admitting their testimony says, "but the question is, whether they were excellent judges. Their uncharitable zeal is indeed unquestionable." [3] Then he adds:

> Thus our Lee, who, if he had kept the fool indoors, might have passed off for a tolerable divine, chose rather to purchase renown, such as it was, by heading the clamorous, unlearned, or half-learned censurers of Erasmus, and of all reformations. Amongst these indeed he might hope to make a figure, though not amongst more eminent persons; and it is no wonder, that an ambitious man should choose rather to be the leader of a paltry sect, than to be lost among scholars of the second or third class.[4]

How unjust all this was to Lee a short sketch of his life and activities will show.

Edward Lee was born in 1482, and was thus four years younger than More, and sixteen years younger than Erasmus. He was the son of Richard Lee of Lee Magna in Kent, and grandson of Sir Richard Lee, who was a predecessor of John Colet's father in the office of Lord

[1] "Quo vno nihil vnquam adhuc terra produxit, nec arrogantius, nec virulentius, nec stultius." (Eras. Ep. 1103.)
[2] *Erasmus,* Vol. I, p. 92. [3] *Idem.* [4] *Ibid.,* p. 93.

Mayor of London, having held that office in 1461 and again in 1470. The young Edward was educated at Oxford, where he graduated in 1503. Wishing to continue his studies, and the plague at that time being endemic at Oxford, he went to Cambridge to complete them.[5] He was accounted a man of great learning and talent, which recommended him to the court of Henry VIII, where he acquired the esteem of Sir Thomas More. The king likewise conceived so high an opinion of his political abilities that he sent him on several embassies to the continent. In 1529 he was made Chancellor of Sarum, and in 1531 was incorporated in the degree of D.D. at Oxford, which he had previously taken at Louvain. The same year he was consecrated Archbishop of York, which post he held through varying vicissitudes until his death in 1541. He lived in the stirring times of the Reformation, and, like most of the English bishops under Henry VIII, never felt that his head was secure for a moment. Hunt says that Sir Thomas More was somewhat displeased with him for attacking Erasmus, but that it did not lessen his friendship for Lee. Another writer says that Lee and More had been boyhood friends and that their attachment was very close all their lives.

Lee was much devoted to biblical studies and had written a commentary on the Old Testament, as Erasmus had written one on the New Testament. He was later a patron of scholars; and Ascham, to whom he had given a pension of forty shillings a year (equivalent to twenty times that amount nowadays), asks the assistance of a friend of his own to have this commentary printed, offering to do all the work of editing it, besides writing the preface for this work of his departed benefactor. Jortin, in mentioning this fact, informs us that the "Commentary never came forth"; ungraciously adding that "certainly posterity hath lost nothing by the suppression of it."[6] Several of his works were published, however, especially those against Erasmus, and these still exist to attest to his learning and scholarship. In addition to the esteem in which he was held by the king and More, his talents were equally appreciated at Rome; and ecclesiastical preferment followed closely on his political advancement. Besides More's attachment for him, he was highly regarded by Colet, Warham, Fisher, and Tunstall; and while these continued to be friendly towards Erasmus they shared with Lee, in varying degrees, the same apprehension of harm to come from Erasmus' inopportune animadversions on Church officials and conventions. The *Praise of Folly* had been condoned for the sake of its author, from whom more worthy things were expected; but now that the *New Testament* had appeared, and his annotations were found to repeat the sort of thing which had given so much offense in the former work, they were not too well pleased. Luther was just beginning to question and challenge things in Germany; and it was an unpropitious time for Erasmus to advocate changes in the established version of the Scriptures, no matter how well founded they might be. It was a time of

[5] Rev. William Hunt, in the *Dictionary of National Biography*, gives a very full but succinct account of Lee's birth, education, honors, and achievements, from which we have abstracted much concerning him.

[6] *Op. cit.*, p. 91n.

peril, of crisis in Church affairs, and the moment was ill chosen to weaken the authority of the *Vulgate* which had served the Church for so many centuries. And ever and always the personality of the man who was advocating these unusual departures was taken into account by those whose suspicions of his sincerity he himself had aroused by his ill-advised *Praise of Folly*. Such seem to have been the feelings and the attitude of Lee towards Erasmus and his *New Testament* at this precise moment; and it must have taken considerable moral courage to thus antagonize the friend of his own dearest friends by attacking his book. Erasmus has passed very uncharitable judgment on the motives that actuated Lee in this affair, but a careful and dispassionate survey of the circumstances has led us to the conclusion that Lee was at least sincere and not animated by any unworthy motives.

We must not, however, close our eyes to the fact that the quarrel between these two men was primarily a writers' quarrel; and that, on account of the jealous and sensitive nature of literary men, such differences are apt to deteriorate into bitter hostility. When Erasmus arrived at Louvain on his way to Basle to have the second edition of the *New Testament* printed, he met Lee whom he had previously known as a friend of More. In the course of conversation it transpired that Lee had been doing work on biblical subjects, some of which touched on the same topics treated by Erasmus in his annotations. But we will give the origin of the quarrel in Erasmus' own words, and so we shall not have to rely on the statements, inferences, or shadings of any of his biographers, all of whom seem to have condemned Lee, but without, as we think, just cause:

> It was here [Louvain] that I first met Lee. Which of us first paid his respects to the other I do not remember, nor does it much matter, although he deems it of great importance that I should be credited with going to his house first. And, indeed, at that time my intimacy with the man was not displeasing, as I am very ready in acquiring friendships, too much so in the judgment of many, for at that time I was not unaware that he had spoken of me in anything but a friendly manner even before he had met or seen me. His courteous manners were pleasing, I appreciated the bent of his mind, and his studies met my approbation. At that time he had begun to study Greek, and for a long time we spoke of nothing else. I looked with favor on his efforts, but I would scruple to call myself his tutor. At length our friendship extended to the secrets of our own rooms, and I showed him my labors.[7] For I had almost completed the entire work, except that efforts of this sort are seldom complete, as there always remains something to be done. He often saw all my margins filled in every direction, and with scraps of paper added here and there. For so many months I had done nothing else, for I am a man, as many know, neither fond of sleep nor lazy. At length he intimated that he also had made some annotations. I was glad to hear it, and begged him to let me see them. For believe me, what he insists on in many words, that with

[7] On the *New Testament*.

unfair entreaties I prevailed on him to leave his own studies and assist me, is far from the truth. Of his own volition he undertook the task, and undertook it for his own benefit. He showed me a few pages, but one by one, and many only half pages; nor were they consecutive, but now one on Matthew and now one on Paul. What his design was is uncertain. While thus comparing notes I felt it somewhat unpleasant to disagree with him on anything. So I made a compact with him, that, as he had the right to freely criticize any point he desired, so in turn it would be permitted to me at times to dissent from him, especially in my own work which was written not for one man alone but for the whole world. Now up to that time the affair had proceeded agreeably. But at length sheets were brought to me in which there were too many needlessly cutting remarks, as it seemed to me. In a few places I added some slight remarks which casually came into my mind. But I never suspected that these things, thus set down, and which I myself could hardly read, would be made use of in his dialogue.

Erasmus here seems to be acting somewhat disingenuously, and is minimizing as much as possible. It was Lee's direct charge that Erasmus had used his ideas and given him no credit for them. Here Erasmus admits that after reading Lee's papers he made some changes in his own, which is exactly what Lee claimed. But Erasmus seeks to modify the importance of what he got by stating he could hardly read the things. Yet he would hardly have appropriated them for his work had he scarcely been able to read them.

Finally, when it appeared that he was becoming unnecessarily angry, I wrote this, "Remember that you are assisting a man with advice, but you yourself are only a man." How he took this I know not, but from that day he ceased to send me any more notes, and even refrained from calling on me.

Such a course of conduct on the part of Lee seems childish beyond belief, and is not consonant with his character as others have depicted it. In seeking to justify himself Erasmus seems to have attributed to Lee a sort of puerility which we cannot bring ourselves to credit.

His face seemed changed to me. I began to suspect that some evil tongue had come between us, which is a pest that often destroys good friendships. After a few days I met him by chance in St. Peter's Church and asked him why he had changed so. He said that that was no fit place for explanations; for he was engaged, as I imagine, in saying his office for Vespers. I departed and proceeded to do what I had come for. A little while after Easter, we were both dining with Adrian the Hebrew. Lee's face was not very cordial, but that was no place for discussions. Suspecting nothing worse than what had happened, I start off for Basle in order to reissue my *New Testament,* carrying away with me none of Lee's annotations except one little sheet, on which I had caused to

> be copied the annotation which he had made on the genealogy of Christ according to Luke, a thing which was somewhat long, and which I had not the leisure to read up at that time in Annius, Philo, Ambrose, and Jerome. And even this was of no use to me, although I wish it had been, for the reason that it had become hidden among the sheets and was never found until everything was printed and I was planning my return.[8]

And thus the Apology goes on through thirty solid pages, wherein he denies that he got any help from Lee, and then, consistently inconsistent, admits that he had carried off one sheet, but says that it was unimportant, and immediately unsays this by stating that he did not have time to read up in Annius and others on what this sheet contained. He proceeds to say that when he got back to Louvain he heard a report that Lee had attacked innumerable passages in his annotations. When Erasmus asked him why from a friend he had become an enemy, he gave these three reasons: first, that somebody in England had written to Erasmus and told him to beware of a certain theologian, and that Lee felt that he was the person meant. Secondly, that Erasmus had challenged him to a show of dialetics and that he had spoken disparagingly of his ability, which wound was still smarting. Thirdly, that Erasmus had despised his criticisms, calling them scribblings and trifles. Erasmus denies the first charge, partly admits the second, and explains away the third. Next he heard that Lee had incorporated all his criticisms of Erasmus' annotations into a book, which he was circulating from hand to hand, and that he was going to print it and show by it where Erasmus in six hundred passages of his annotations had made palpable errors. This thoroughly alarmed Erasmus. He asked Lee to let him see this manuscript book, which request Lee promptly refused. Lee made several attempts to have his work printed, but claimed that Erasmus suborned each printer to whom he applied not to touch the book. Erasmus denied this, but admitted that, when he heard that Lee was negotiating with printers in Antwerp, Cologne, Bonn, and eventually in Paris, he got into communication with each of these printers in order to secure in this way an early copy for his own perusal. After a delay of a year it was eventually printed at Paris; but whether Erasmus was responsible for this delay by influencing the German printers let each reader judge for himself.

Although it was a writers' quarrel, we must not assume that pure petulance moved either of them. It was now 1519, and the feelings of men were somewhat acidified by the happenings in Germany, where the learned were divided into two camps, one frankly Lutheran, and the other and larger camp frankly anti-Lutheran. The utterances of public men were being scrutinized for indications of their leanings in matters theological; and so it is not strange that Lee charged Erasmus specific-

[8] *Apologia Erasmi Rotcrodami, nihil habens, neque nasi, neque dentis, neque stomachi, neque unguium, qua respondet duabus inuectiuis Eduardi Lei, nihil addo qualibus, ipse iudicato, lector.* Antwerp, 1520. This, having been suppressed by Erasmus, however, is rare. See in Jortin, *Erasmus,* Vol. III, Appendix LI, pp. 186 *sqq.,* where it is quoted.

ally with omitting the passage in St. John's Epistle, v, 7, about the "Three who give testimony in Heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost," thus giving comfort to Arianism. But it is not only the errors of Erasmus that stirred Lee to action, but the dread he felt that, by thus dissecting the wording of the sacred volume and showing wherein it differs from Greek originals which may or may not be correct, the whole sacred writings might come into doubt and contempt with the unlearned and the unthinking. This may or may not have been a well-founded fear on the part of Lee but, so far as Erasmus was concerned, it was a pure question of scholarship, let come what might as a result. It is a knotty question, which we will not attempt to discuss here.

In replying to Lee, Erasmus at first made use of the delicate shafts of his cutting wit. He asks him why this sudden turning of a friend into an enemy; why this writing behind his back; why this criticizing of the first edition of the *New Testament* when he knew that he (Erasmus) was getting out a second; why Lee had scattered copies of his manuscript throughout every monastery, especially when he knew that there was very little love for Erasmus in those places; why he asserted that there were six hundred passages in annotations which were blameworthy, yet had never drawn their author's attention to one. Then he resorts to satire:

> If you had straightway published your manuscript, everyone would have admired the felicity of your mighty genius which enabled you in a few short months to devour so much Greek and Hebrew, that, in your opinion, Erasmus knows nothing of Greek, or Jerome of Hebrew.[9] . . . Nay, they say that, three days after you had begun to study Hebrew, you found many things to condemn in Reuchlin, and not a few in Capito.[10] It may be that the Supreme Pontiff, admiring this almost divine genius of yours, will hand over to you the rod, and entrust to you the censorship of the entire world; and no longer shall any book be either published or read unless it shall have merited the approval of Lee, the Aristarchus, forsooth, of all literary matters. There are many who are now saying that you are keeping your renowned criticisms under cover with this design, that, when I am satisfactorily disposed of, then at length you will publish them and be sole victor; that is, you will win an inglorious victory when there is no one to fight against you.[11]

Though this is the most delightful satire, it is not argument, and Lee is entitled to hold his ground. Soon Erasmus changes his tactics, and essays to menace Lee with the anger of the German scholars. He intimates that he would not wish for worlds that anything bad should happen to Lee on account of having unfavorably criticized the *New Testament,* but feels it to be his duty to warn him:

[9] To do Lee justice, he nowhere said so.

[10] Erasmus is here working the *on dit* to extremes, for there is no evidence that Lee ever said a word about Reuchlin or Capito in their disfavor.

[11] Eras. Ep. 998, ll. 27 *sqq.*

> There is no nation in which my writings have not made me some friends, but in Germany there are many who show their affection for me even more than I could wish. And you are well aware of the courage of that people and the violence of their temper. For not yet have they entirely laid aside their native ferocity, although they are constantly becoming milder by reason of humanistic literature. You see for yourself with what sort of writing they slay those by whom they are injured. Already, as a matter of fact, I have stopped their pens, sometimes by personal appeal, and sometimes by letter, and will continue to do so as far as in me lies. But I hear that several are threatening worse things than those I have mentioned; and should anything of the sort happen, which may God avert, not even I could remedy your misfortune; and as the suspicion of men is directed towards me, the odium of it would fall on my head. Thus from your misfortune a double disadvantage would accrue to me: firstly, that I should grieve to see you injured on my account, for I wish nothing to happen to you; secondly, that there will not be lacking those who will suspect that it was done with my connivance. So that while I hope nothing of the kind will take place, on the other hand, I fear lest it might. If there is no danger, then my fear was that of a friend; but if there be, then I warned you even more like a friend so that you might, if you see fit, adopt any plan that may seem best to your prudence. Farewell. Louvain, July 15, 1519.[12]

Whether he really thought that a man of Lee's calibre would take alarm on reading these mock heroics is a question; but the fact is that Lee refused to be frightened. We may add incidentally that it is not part of the English character to be thus easily frightened, but evidently Erasmus was not aware of this.

More and others were meanwhile laboring to bring about a reconciliation between them, and would have succeeded had it not been for a piece of sharp practice on the part of Erasmus which came to Lee's ears. He found out on undoubted authority that, while More was making sincere and strenuous efforts to bring about a reconciliation, Erasmus had been writing to Richard Foxe, Bishop of Winchester, and several other of his friends, asking them to stop his mouth if they could. This was naturally resented by Lee, and the quarrel waxed hotter, especially after Lee had perused the second edition of the *New Testament* and still found matter which he deemed erroneous. So he proceeded to make public his criticisms, expressing at the same time in terms of strong reprobation his opinion of Erasmus' duplicity. From questions of scholarship and theology they passed on to the arena of personalities, in which each sought to belittle the other. Each in turn wrote diatribes against the other; there were replies and counter-replies *ad nauseam*: so that the *"tantaene irae animis coelestibus"* of our schooldays recurs not unnaturally to mind. Although the friends he had made in England did not

[12] *Idem.*, ll. 61 *sqq.*

entirely abandon him, Erasmus' popularity there visibly declined from this time on, so that his eventual departure might easily be predicated.[13]

Instead of hearing promising replies and inviting messages from England, he learned that hostile rumors were rife concerning himself personally and his writings generally. Bishop Foxe of Winchester, whose acquaintance with him was of long standing but whose real friendship had always eluded him, seemed to be the storm centre of these alarming reports; so to him he addressed himself in the hope of offsetting any harm that might ensue.

> Most reverend Bishop. If ever my regard for you was pleasing, I ask only this in return, that you will not too readily believe any of the calumnies against me, which like a fatal pestilence are infecting everything. If Edward Lee shall demonstrate that he has a better understanding of things than I have, I shall never feel offended. But when here and among his own friends he is permeating everything with his hostile insinuations, whether these appear in his writings or in his conversations, whether they are disseminated by him personally or through his friends, he is not having due regard for his reputation. Long since he has plainly and openly manifested this more than unfriendly disposition towards me, though I have never injured him by word or deed. He is young and he burns with the desire for glory; but it had been better for him to seek it under better auspices. I know your prudence, which does not easily pronounce an opinion, especially an adverse one. Time will bring all things to light; the truth may have to struggle, but it cannot be overcome. If you by your authority will counsel Lee to desist from these calumnies which defame him more than myself, or that he contend with me by argument only, you will be protecting his reputation. Now, he is carried away by his hatred of me, like a man with a diseased mind. Long ago Erasmus sought for your favor, but did not succeed; now he asks not that you favor him, but that you consult the interests of your friend Lee. Farewell, your lordship, to whom I consecrate and dedicate myself entirely. Antwerp, May 25, 1519.[14]

The last two sentences sound very like a threat and show that Erasmus, notwithstanding his long intercourse with Englishmen, did not at all understand the English character, which does not easily yield to threats. Evidently he made but little impression on the Bishop by pronouncing Lee's statements to be calumnies; for, since Lee had lived in the Bishop's own household, the Bishop naturally had an ample opportunity to know

[13] See *Apologiae Eduardi Leei contra quorundam calumnias,* Paris, n.d. Also, *Annotationes Eduardi Leei in Annotationes Noui Testamenti Desiderii Erasmi,* Paris, 1520; *Des. Erasmi Roterodami liber quo respondet Annotationibus Eduardi Lei, quibus ille locos aliquot taxare conatus est in quatuor euangeliis,* Basle, 1540. Also, *Des. Erasmi liber alter quo respondet reliquis Annotationibus Eduardi Lei,* Basle, 1520.

[14] Eras. Ep. 973.

whether or not calumny was a trait in Lee's character. In any case, he did nothing in the matter, and left the letter unanswered.

So the battle continued with reply and counter-reply, as we have already set down, until about a year afterwards, when Erasmus in desperation again tried to have the Bishop draw Lee off his flanks:

> Reverend Bishop. It is impossible to express how much it displeases all upright men that Edward Lee has assailed my good name with such manifest abuse. And indeed it is not so much myself he hurts as every lover of good literature, to the service of which I have hitherto devoted my talents. No letters from my friends, no admonitions from myself, have been of avail to deter him from inflicting this stain on his own reputation as well as on mine. His book has appeared under bad auspices, with great detriment to my fame, but with still greater injury to his own. To his abuse I have replied more temperately than some wished; to his arguments I have replied in such a manner that I feel sure he will never make any response. And yet in all this I have refrained from abusing him. Not content with this, Lee has prepared another pamphlet still more virulent, I am informed, which he has sent to Paris to have printed. He does not listen to the sound advice of his friends, nor will he ever cease unless he be coerced by your authority. And would this had been done before this conflagration had burst forth! At London he has secretly instigated a certain Carthusian monk, whose name, I think, is John Batmanson, a young man totally unlearned, as appears from his writings, but boastful to the point of craziness. Now, if your authority will restrain Lee from his furious brawlings, you will be consulting not only for the interests of my own literary work, but also for that of Edward's, since at present he is using up both his own leisure and my own. Farewell, Louvain, May 5, 1520.[15]

As far as we know, the Bishop took no notice of either of these letters, nor does there seem to have ever been any further correspondence between Foxe and Erasmus. The reason, therefore, that he winced so much under Lee's attacks was not that he was unable to answer them, but that Lee was calling attention to the irreverent quality of his writings, wherein appeared much that shocked, much that was calculated to awaken scepticism, much that was contrary to the traditional attitude of the Church. Fearing Lee's influence also with the Bishop of Durham, who had up to that time been friendly towards him, he had previously hastened to forestall any untoward action of that prelate by sending him a copy of his recently published *Paraphrase on the Epistle to the Galatians,* accompanied by the following letter:

> Most reverend father. Since Aristotle has written that many friendships are severed by silence, I was unwilling that the same thing should happen to me, especially with regard to such a friend as yourself. I send you my *Paraphrase on the Epistle to the Galatians,* in which occurs the passage about Peter being reproved by the

[15] *Ibid.,* 1099. (That Batmanson was anything but unlearned may be easily seen by referring to Allen's note to line 17 of this letter.)

voice of Paul, which in my estimation has not yet been satisfactorily explained by any of the old commentators.

I am not unaware that there are many rumors being spread around concerning me. The friends of ignorance feel that honorable studies are reviving, and on that account leave no stone unturned to hinder; but truth will conquer as time goes on. For that reason I earnestly beg your lordship not to believe too readily what these scourges of Erasmus say. At present, by some unlucky chance, they are out of their minds; but in a short time, when they have begun to know better, they will be ashamed of their malady, just as happened to Ajax. Farewell, most generous father, and continue to show yourself the same kind friend that you always were. Antwerp, May 25, 1519.[16]

Like Foxe, the Bishop of Durham made no response, or, if he did, it was so displeasing to Erasmus that he omitted it from all collections of his letters. So the continued attacks of Lee, which were particularly dangerous at the moment because of the general alarm which Luther had caused the prelates and clergy generally, had weakened the hold which Erasmus had obtained on the majority of his English friends. This feeling of coldness was increased by his constant repetition that Luther was an exceedingly worthy man, of good personal character, and that his critics had better let him alone. And this at a time when the Pope had issued his bull against him and had summoned him to Rome for trial. The letters of affection and admiration which used to come to Erasmus from England had ceased almost entirely; and he had to recognize the fact that Lee, on the one hand, and his own laudations of the Saxon monk who was in open rebellion against the Holy See, on the other, had for the present alienated from him the regard of most of the old friends and patrons. We may include in the number Warham, Wolsey, Foxe, Whitford, Ruthall, Urswick, Linacre, William Latimer, Grocyn, and many others. More's letters, too, became less warm for a time, as also those of John Fisher, Bishop of Rochester. Of Colet's attitude towards him at this juncture we cannot speak definitely, as he had died during this year, a fact to which we shall revert more at length presently. That More and Fisher did not entirely fall away from him like the rest is due, no doubt, to their particular turn of mind. Both these men, who afterwards suffered death rather than betray what they considered their principles, had reveled in the fierce joy of controversy, More in behalf of Erasmus, and Fisher in behalf of Reuchlin, and had the openness of purpose and fearlessness of consequences that are characteristic of really great minds. But even they became strangely silent when they saw, long before it had made itself apparent to Erasmus, whither this rebellion of Luther against the constituted authority of the Church was going to lead; and, when they saw him, as it were, clapping Luther on the back, they would not follow him further along this road which to their acute minds must necessarily end in an *impasse*. It took some time for Erasmus to recognize that he had thus alienated from

[16] Eras. Ep. 974.

himself these loyal and generous English friends; and it was only after he had unwillingly consented to write against Luther that any of them became again cordial towards him.

We do not feel that Drummond has given a fair presentation of the case as between Lee and Erasmus. Great names are apt to sway our judgment in their favor; and we feel that in his flippant treatment of Lee this biographer has been somewhat unjust to a man deserving of better usage, especially at the hands of an English writer. By this we do not mean that he should have overlooked Lee's faults, but that he should have looked at them with the same degree of forbearance that he was forced to exercise in observing those of Erasmus. They were both to blame in varying degrees; and the best thing that Erasmus said in the whole discussion was to advise his readers not to lose their time either in perusing Lee's charges or in reading his own justification. And after all, Lee was not entirely in the wrong, as Erasmus many years afterwards confessed, saying that he had learned many things from him.[17] But where Drummond has been unjust to Lee, even more so than Erasmus was, is painfully evident where he charges Lee with treachery in the matter of the *Three Heavenly Witnesses* in the First Epistle of John v. 7. Lee had declared this passage authentic, but Erasmus had omitted it in his first and second editions of the *New Testament,* on the grounds that he did not find it in any of his Greek manuscripts. Erasmus very magnanimously agreed to restore it in his third edition if it could be found in any Greek original. Lee accepted the offer and found it for him in an English codex which Erasmus calls the *Codex Britannicus.* Erasmus was as good as his word, and the disputed matter appeared in the next edition. Not to do Drummond any intentional injustice, we shall quote his own words.

> It might seem that there could be no doubt with whom the victory would remain in a contest of this kind between learning and capacity upon the one side, and ignorance and dullness on the other; but, unfortunately, treachery supplied the place of knowledge, and Lee carried away the most substantial fruits of a conflict in which he was otherwise completely defeated. Erasmus in his reply had twice professed his willingness to insert the testimony of the Three Witnesses if a single manuscript could be produced containing it. Lee must in due time have satisfied himself that none such could be found at Oxford or Cambridge, nor probably anywhere else. But what then? Were there no amanuenses living? Was it impossible to have a manuscript written on purpose, which should contain the disputed words and satisfy the scruples of this troublesome Grecian? That the *Codex Montfortianus* was written under the direction of Lee, with the express object of deceiving his opponent and exacting from him the fulfilment of his promise, there is indeed no positive proof; but its opportune appearance at this particular juncture lends a countenance to the supposition, and there was nothing in the character of Lee to make it probable that he would have hesitated to commit

[17] See *Apologia versus Sutorem,* in the dedication.

a pious fraud which he thought so important to the orthodox faith. One only wonders that he should have gone such a long way round to accomplish his purpose instead of simply affirming the existence of the manuscript; but no doubt he had a tender conscience, and found it more agreeable to equivocate than to lie; and besides, how did he know but Erasmus would run over to England to have a sight of this newly discovered treasure? Erasmus, however, was very easily satisfied. It does not appear that he ever even saw the *Codex Britannicus,* as he calls it. He desired peace, and shrunk from the clamor that was raised against him on all sides. Having been informed, therefore, that a manuscript had been found containing the testimony of the *Heavenly Witnesses,* although he suspected, and with great reason, that it had been corrected after the Latin, he inserted the spurious words in his third edition, which appeared in 1522. There the text corresponds exactly with the reading of the *Codex Montfortianus,* which is now deposited in the Library of Trinity College, Dublin, proving its identity with the *Codex Britannicus* of Erasmus. In the subsequent editions it was altered into better Greek.[18]

And the above quotation has been offered and accepted as history. Bluntly stated, Drummond here accuses Lee of forgery. By implication he brands with stupidity and dullness Erasmus, Melancthon, and all the German scholars, not to speak of More, Warham, Fisher, and all the English scholars. Is it for a moment to be thought that all these great minds would allow themselves to be circumvented by such a cheap and vulgar trick? The thing is preposterous, and never entered the minds of even such sturdy champions of Erasmus as LeClerc, DeBurigni, or even Jortin. What is more, the passage in question is accepted as genuine by Luther, by the Sixtine and Clementine editors, the editors of the King James Version, and even the editors of the last Revised Edition. How in the face of such evidence Drummond could make this astounding charge of forgery against Lee we cannot understand; but since it is his own and unsupported by any proof whatever, we leave it with him, reminding the reader, however, that Erasmus was a proud spirit and exceedingly hard to convince. He would take no man's word on a point of scholarship; and with so many of his own acquaintances in England there is no reason to doubt that he had the *Codex Britannicus* investigated thoroughly before yielding to Lee's victory over him. Drummond would have had much more reason to doubt the existence of the Rhodian manuscript which Stunica quoted against Erasmus, for that manuscript has not been seen since shortly after it was made use of in compiling the Complutensian Polyglot. And yet exegetes do not doubt that it was at one time in existence, although Erasmus never saw it. But men of the standing of Erasmus, or Lee, or Stunica, would not compromise their reputation by any such means.

A dispassionate survey of the controversy up to this point shows that Lee is fairly entitled to the credit of having maintained his position in

[18] *Op. cit.,* Vol. I, pp. 333-35.

spite of Erasmus' utmost efforts to dislodge him. Erasmus saw himself compelled to bring on his heaviest armament, and issued his *Apologia.*[19] This certainly was a masterpiece of satire, invective, and plain insult. Apparently not having full confidence in his ability entirely to crush Lee with his own pen, he conceived the fell plan of making him a target to be pierced and riddled by the arrows of all the friends whom he could enlist in the task. Here is the plan as disclosed in a letter from Erasmus to Jodocus Jonas:

> I received your last and most welcome letter. I have replied to Lee in such a way that he cannot open his mouth hereafter, unless he chooses to load me with abuse like any strumpet. Now there remains another thing to be done; that is, that my friends write condemnatory letters against Lee, but in such a manner that, while censuring Lee, they will praise the learned men of England and all the nobility of that country who favor learning, and that they will subject him to ridicule as a fool, a boaster, and a hypocrite of no importance, rather than to attack him directly. I would like to obtain many such letters the better to overwhelm him. Let them be gotten from the learned, and sent to me by safe hands, and I will revise them and see that they are printed. Let there be a great variety in them. I have given one such to William Nesen for your instruction. April 9, 1520.[20]

The result of this plan, malignant in its inception and disastrous to Lee in its results, lets in more light on the character of Erasmus than possibly any other thing which we have brought forward in this study of the great humanist's make-up. His intent was now to isolate Lee from his English friends that he might destroy him utterly. Fortunately for Lee, the plot was successful only in the cases of Lupset and Pace, and then but temporarily.

In a firm and dignified manner, without any attempt to evade the points raised by Erasmus, Lee proceeded to answer Erasmus' *Apologia* categorically. He agrees with Erasmus that disputed points are proper subjects of discussion between scholars without any need of endangering friendship thereby, and hence is surprised at Erasmus' attitude towards him.[21] He coincides in the former's remark that, in so many thousands of his annotations, there was always the chance of an error creeping in, but cannot understand his resentment in having them pointed out to him.[22] To the assertion of Erasmus that Lee had suddenly turned enemy, Lee replied that he was no enemy to him but only to his errors; and when Erasmus charges him with writing against him behind his back, he gives it a straight denial and shows his proof.[23] To the charge of Erasmus that Lee communicated his manuscript of criticisms to everyone who happened to be an enemy, Lee succinctly answers that only two men have yet seen it, namely, More and Latimer, who were friends of them both.[24] Erasmus then asks him, "If you wish to profit others, why

[19] *Apologia Erasmi qua respondet duabus inuectiuis.*
[20] Eras. Ep. 1088.
[21] *Ibid.*, 1061, ll. 3 *sqq.*
[22] *Ibid.*, ll. 22 *sqq.*
[23] *Ibid.*, ll. 27 *sqq.*
[24] *Ibid.*, ll. 40 *sqq.*

do you not publish your manuscript?" To which Lee counters with the charge that Erasmus had so tampered with the printers in various cities that he had so far been unable to have it printed;[25] and when Lee pressed this point on him, Erasmus admitted it on the plea that he only wanted to secure an early copy. To Erasmus' question why, if Lee had no confidence in his book, he boasted about it everywhere; or, if he did not rely upon it, why he was so anxious that no one should read it except the professed enemies of Erasmus, Lee replied:

> I leave my book to the judgment of the reader. I do not at all lack confidence in its worth. I do not trust to my own judgment enough, nor do I deem the work so important, that I should boast of it everywhere. Never so far have I been so wrapped up in self-esteem that I objected to the judgment of others: if you had done the same, we should not now be acting out this tragedy.[26]

To the allegation of Erasmus that Lee was infecting scholars with error in thus traducing him, Lee replied that none of the learned was being misled by him, for no man could judge other of Erasmus than he merited; and he puts this question to him: "If I am right in disagreeing with you, why should not the learned agree with me in my opinion? But if in dissenting from you I am in the wrong, I am not such a Suffenus as to demand that everyone should side with me against you."[27] Then Erasmus becomes personal and claims that Lee is not adding any glory to himself, which is really what he is seeking. To which Lee answers:

> If I had a thirst for glory, the quickest way to it would be not to dissent from you, but to act the part of the comedian in the play: "He says it is so: I say it is so; he denies it: I deny it." That is what you, the bestower of immortality, in our first conversation, and many times afterwards, promised me, that you would make my name immortal if I would assist you in this work [the *New Testament*]."[28]

We can perceive that they are now becoming venomous. Erasmus goes on to ridicule Lee by saying that the Pope, filled with admiration at Lee's almost divine intellect, has decided to hand over to him his own rod of censure, and constitute him the Aristarchus of literature. This sarcasm stings Lee, and he in turn rises to the occasion by retorting:

> Thus you please yourself (as usual) by turning me into ridicule. I, knowing my own littleness, do not deem myself worthy of the honor of being the Pope's confidant. But who is ignorant of the fact that long ago you wilfully arrogated to yourself the office of literary Aristarchus, sparing neither ancient nor modern writers, censuring all as if imperially and cathedratically, and condemning even those things which you have hardly looked into; nay, more, attacking the dogmas of the ancients, suffering not even the decrees of the Church to go untouched, seeming, on the face of it, not to me alone but to all, to be supporting the delusions of heretics, claiming

[25] *Ibid.*, ll. 108 *sqq.*
[26] *Ibid.*, ll. 138 *sqq.*
[27] *Ibid.*, ll. 145 *sqq.*
[28] *Ibid.*, ll. 159 *sqq.*

theology for your own peculiar province, and despising all except yourself, as I have learned from people who in theology are more learned, if I mistake not, than even yourself. Am I so insane as to desire that office, when you preoccupy it in such a manner? I have always cultivated the erudite. I have never looked down on even the most trivial work of any author. And I certainly do not despise yours, even though at times I may dissent from you. I have never criticized your studies as such. I could only wish in you a little more discretion and moderation, and perhaps, in certain matters, a little more judgment.[29]

Then Erasmus insinuates that Lee must be awaiting his death so that he can then publish his book undisturbed; to which Lee replies that he will not interfere with the shade of Erasmus, and that, as far as he himself is concerned, Erasmus shall rest in peace.[30] Then Erasmus intimates that others have assisted Lee in composing that work; to which the latter answers that, such as it is, it is his own, and he deems it not of that excellence that anyone will quarrel about its authorship.[31] Then Erasmus generously tells him that he is not offended with him to the extent that he would wish him to lose the regard of his friends on his account; which stirs up Lee to explain:

I wonder how you dare to say such a thing, when in every possible way you have been trying to bring down the whole learned world on my head, and have aroused some of my friends in England against me. You are sowing cockle between me and some of the best and most learned of men, who, however, out of their wisdom, will give no heed to your incantation, I trust.

Then he goes on to give Erasmus a deserved castigation for the filthiness of some of his *Colloquies*,[32] and finally takes up the threat about the ferocity of Erasmus' German friends who were meditating to do violence on Lee if he did not cease attacking him. This is too much for Lee's sense of what is fit, and he very neatly unhorses Erasmus by defending the Germans. He says:

I could hardly be led to believe such a thing possible of the German soldiery, but I would never believe that the German scholars, whose probity I measure by their learning, of which in these days they are the leaders, would willingly lend themselves to such a shameful deed. I should be very loath to put such a disgraceful stigma on the learned men of my native England as you would seek to affix on the German men of letters; and, in spite of what you say, I shall still continue to believe that the German scholars are men whose judgment is not swayed by their passions, and whose verdict in literary matters is not enforced by the sword. If it has come to this, that such matters are to be settled by violent means, then let Erasmus sit alone in his official chair so far as I am concerned, and let him prescribe with impunity whatever he wishes, for I have not learned

[29] *Ibid.*, ll. 221 *sqq.*
[30] *Ibid.*, ll. 249 *sqq.*
[31] *Ibid.*, ll. 258 *sqq.*
[32] *Ibid.*, ll. 316 *sqq.*

to fight with swords. . . . If harsher things than your pen are threatening me, who has stirred them up against me except you, who would say anything whereby you might hurt me? . . .

Where now is that Christian soul of yours, which never breathes anything but charity, moderation, affability, and sincerity? . . . If anyone is lurking about to do me injury, Erasmus is plainly the author thereof. . . . I am not so stupid as not to perceive these wiles of yours. It is all your work, but you do not wish to have it known as yours. You are an enemy, but you assume the character of a friend; and you so act as if the onlookers were stones and you deemed yourself able to use sleight-of-hand tricks which none but yourself could understand. Oh, that you were really what you wish to be considered, for then there would be no dissension between us, and the affairs of the Church would go on more happily and peacefully.[33]

After expressing some natural regret that this trouble should have arisen between two who were formerly so friendly, he returns again to the insinuation thrown out by Erasmus that in thus criticizing the annotations he was only seeking glory, and very neatly shows what he is sacrificing in abandoning the title of "Lee the friend of Erasmus and of all good literature," which Erasmus was trying to confer on him; and he ends his letter in the following few words:

I have said what I have felt, openly and sincerely. I have used no deceit, nor have I ever taken counsel of hatred. But as it would appear most proper that I should cast back charges that I cannot admit, yet at the same time it has been very distasteful and unpleasant to contend with you, a man so generally famous, and whom I used to regard as a friend and the friend of my friends. But I ought not to be held responsible for what I cannot avoid. I had decided to keep absolutely silent in the matter and to enjoy my leisure, had you only permitted me: for surely never was a quarrel more disagreeable to me than this. February 1, 1520.[34]

If in this lengthy account of the quarrel between Lee and Erasmus we seem to have devoted more space than the matter deserves, our only justification is that the many lights and shades that it throws on the character of Erasmus make it exceedingly valuable to us as a biographer. The little things which frequently look to be unimportant are often more enlightening than a whole chapter of major happenings. So we will pass on, hoping that the impressions which we ourselves and our readers gained may be either strengthened or entirely eradicated by what is to ensue. In either case, we put the task of deciding this squarely on the judgment of our readers.

[33] *Ibid.*, ll. 159 *sqq.*

[34] *Ibid.*, ll. 820 *ad fin.*

CHAPTER III

THE "NOVVM TESTAMENTVM": CONTROVERSY WITH STUNICA

Diego Lopez de Zuñiga, or, as he was better known to that age, James Stunica, was a bitter and dangerous antagonist of Erasmus with regard to the recently issued *New Testament.* He was an opponent to be feared because he was equally as learned as Erasmus, or possibly more so, possessing, in addition to his accomplishments in Latin and Greek, a profound knowledge of Hebrew, so deep in fact, that it aroused the suspicion in some minds, as it did similarly in the case of Aleander, that he was a Jew. It was a time of suspicion, when not only a man's writings and utterances were closely scanned, but even his race, parentage, and previous condition were inquired into in an effort to isolate and bring to light his hidden motives. That Stunica was a man of reputation amongst scholars and versed in the knowledge of the Scriptures is attested to by the fact that he was invited by Cardinal Ximenes to assist in the arduous task of preparing the Complutensian edition of the Bible, which was to appear in the three languages, Latin, Greek, and Hebrew. Thus he was engaged in the very same line of work as Erasmus, and hence was well fitted to point out any mistakes that might occur in such work. This he proceeded to do, but not in the calm, judicial manner which is so desirable in discussions of this sort, where the sole object to be attained should be the truth and the truth only. As in the case of most of those who wrote against Erasmus, it was the *Praise of Folly* which had caused Stunica's hostility towards him; and he did not hesitate to say of that book that it must have been dictated by the mouth of the devil.[1] He said that he was thoroughly alarmed at the hardihood with which Erasmus dared to meddle with the *Vulgate,* and that his influence on the unwary and thoughtless could not be anything but pernicious. He pointed out the many mistakes that Erasmus had made in his *New Testament,* and showed his work to Cardinal Ximenes, who counseled him to send it to Erasmus, saying that, if Erasmus made a satisfactory response, it would not be necessary to publish it; but, if he did not show the proper disposition in the matter, it would then be soon enough to vindicate the truth. This was good advice on the part of this eminent man, and shows us that had a really great soul. Erasmus embellishes the story by adding that the Cardinal wished others would write like Erasmus, and he states that Stunica did not dare to publish his criticisms until after the Cardinal's death, which occurred on November 8, 1517. We must remember that Luther had nailed up his ninety-five

[1] See Stunica's *Libellus trium illorum voluminum praecursor quibus Erasmicas impietates ac blasphemias redarguit.* Rome, 1522.

theses on the church door at Wittemberg only a scant eight days before, and the great news had not yet had time to reach Spain. Hence the good old Cardinal, who was a saintly man and accustomed to make allowances for human weaknesses, did not live long enough to see the tremendous tumult that was about to arise in the Church and cause every man to look askance at his brother. When Stunica finally published his book against Erasmus, all those who were most ardent in defense of the Church were closely scrutinizing the utterances of those who were assuming to help as well as those who were trying to hinder the welfare of that Church, and it must be confessed that Erasmus had won a dubious record. While in his *Enchiridion,* his *Adages,* his *Copia,* and his other minor writings he had achieved a well-merited fame and given himself a universal reputation for scholarship, by his *Praise of Folly,* he had instilled into the hearts of men a fear that his religious tenets were hardly sound. And now that Luther was inviting him into his camp and openly making the claim that Erasmus was one of them, it is scarcely to be wondered at that Stunica, and others to follow him for the same reason, used him with scant courtesy and strove to wound him where he was most vulnerable. Such being the state of public opinion in those perilous times, it was the height of indiscretion for Erasmus to bring out a translation of the Scriptures differing from the accepted and time-hallowed version of the Church; but when, in addition, he interlarded his annotations on the sacred text with slurs at monks and theologians, seemingly unable in those critical times to refrain from gratifying his animosity on the score of his favorite obsession, we cannot say that the monks and theologians were much to blame if they doubted his motives and suspected his wisdom. And the inevitable but lamentable result of it all was that we see Stunica calling Erasmus a man without wit, memory, judgment, learning, or knowledge of languages, and not even according him what he certainly could not be deprived of: a profound acquaintance with the Latin tongue. Indeed, he even went so far as to make it a reproach to him that he was born a Dutchman. In return for these amenities, we see Erasmus styling him conceited, shameless, idiotic, proud of himself, and wagging a bitter tongue; while in another place he declares that the whole world knew him to be a lunatic. But the thing that he knew would wound him the worst of all was to call him a Jew, which in those days was to a Spaniard the last insult. He accused him, in addition, of writing at the instigation of the Dominicans; for, like all men who harbor obsessions, Erasmus thought he perceived the hand of the monks in everything that happened to him. But the amusing side of the matter is that while Stunica realizes that he is severe, and intends to be so, Erasmus fails to see that on his side he is departing from the tenor of Christian kindness in his invectives; for in spite of these opprobrious epithets he declares that he treats Stunica courteously, not that Stunica merits it, but that he does not wish to depart from that spirit of moderation which up to the present moment has won for him approbation.[2] Stunica was no mean antagonist, as we have already

[2] Eras. Ep. 1521.

said, but Erasmus, though well aware of the fact, was too proud to accept criticism gracefully; and even when cornered without resource would still fight on. This did not prevent him from announcing to the Pope, the Cardinals, the bishops, and all the lesser ecclesiastical dignitaries, that he was far from considering himself infallible, an attitude on his part which acquired for him the reputation of great fairness among the uninformed. But though Stunica declares that in consequence of his strictures Erasmus amended more than forty passages in succeeding editions of his *New Testament,* we look in vain for any acknowledgement of that fact from Erasmus. Years afterwards, however, our subject did admit that he had learned "something" from Stunica, but that was as far as he would go, and he fails to tell us what that something was.[3] As in the case of Lee we observed that the means employed by Erasmus to shut off his opposition was to alienate his friends, so in the case of Stunica the same methods were employed, with perhaps better success, for here the powerful influence of Erasmus at Rome was put to work with telling effect. One of these influences was that of Cardinal Matthew Schinner, whom he had known and cultivated for some years. By enlisting under the papal banner the many thousands of his Swiss fellow-countrymen and offering their services to Julius II and Leo X in their recent struggles with the French king, this cardinal had bound both Pontiffs to himself by ties of gratitude, so that his influence was of the greatest value to those for whom he chose to exert it. Julius II had made him Bishop of Novara, and Leo X had appointed him to the bishopric of Catania in Sicily.[4]

This was the man who had been secured by Erasmus as a friend and patron. At the time of which we are treating he was in Rome, where he had just been appointed by Pope Adrian VI as administrator of the States of the Church. One of the first things he did on attaining

[3] Simon, *Histoires critiques des versions du Nouveau Testament,* pp. 48, 50, speaks highly of Stunica's abilities, as does also LeClerc in his *Life of Erasmus,* published in the *Bibliothèque choisie.*

[4] This Cardinal, warrior, and statesman was born at Mühlbach in the canton of Valais in Switzerland about 1470, and died of the plague in Rome, October 1, 1522. He was the son of the Lord of Martigny, and was educated under the supervision of his uncle Nicholas, whom he also succeeded as Bishop of Sion in 1499. It was owing to his diplomatic skill that the cantons allied with Valais went to the assistance of both Pope Julius II and, later on, to that of Pope Leo X, in their prolonged and sanguinary struggles to drive the French from Milan and out of Italy. He was present at the head of his troops at the battle of Novara in 1513, where he helped to defeat the French disastrously; and also at the battle of Marignano in 1515, when the fortunes of the day went against him. He was sent to London in 1516 to interest Henry VIII in the formation of an alliance between England, the Pope, the Emperor, and the Spanish monarch; but, while he was there, the Emperor and the Swiss Confederacy made peace with France, and so his efforts came to naught. The French faction in his own diocese of Sion had obtained control of all power during his absence, and he was forced to lead the life of an exile for some years at Zurich, from 1517 to 1519, and then for a short time at the court of the Emperor. In 1521 we find him again leading his sturdy Swiss in behalf of the Emperor against the hereditary enemy the French at Milan; and contemporary historians assure us that had it not been for his inveterate hatred of that nation he would have been the successor of Leo X in the papal chair.

these honors and emoluments was to write to Erasmus, offering him the princely sum of five hundred ducats yearly and his traveling expenses, if he would come to Rome and dwell with him. Erasmus partly accepted, and got as far on the way as Constance; but an attack of his old friend the gravel sent him back again in a hurry to Basle, where of all places he lived most comfortably. In 1519 he had dedicated his *Paraphrase on the Epistle of St. James* to the Cardinal, who was on more than one account particularly well disposed towards him; so that, when Erasmus tells us that the Pope and the Cardinals would not permit Stunica to print a word against him, we can readily see whose restraining hand had been exerted in his behalf.

Now, to return to Stunica. He continued to assert that Erasmus was one of the principal causes of the troubles in the religious world, and that he should be held equally responsible with Luther for the disturbances which were now convulsing Europe. The Spanish scholar had been prevented by Leo X, probably by the interposition of the Cardinal of Sion, from printing his book against Erasmus; but, on that Pontiff's death, and before the election of the new Pontiff, Adrian VI, he had published the work before he could be again prevented. That is the account of the matter given us by Erasmus, who says that Stunica narrowly escaped the bastonnade at the hands of the enraged Cardinals. Then he adds what we have begun to expect him always to say, that the monks assisted Stunica in issuing his pamphlet. Erasmus delayed not a moment in accepting the challenge thrown down to him by Stunica, but was particularly incensed at being accused of Lutheranism. We get some light on the state of his mind from a letter which he wrote to a high official in Rome whose identity is not quite clear, but whose influence in the papal court was of the weightiest importance in the estimation of Erasmus:[5]

> Illustrious Master. I perceive that I am become like Hercules in the ancient fable. For, while I am fighting here with the Lutherans as with a many-headed hydra, a crab has inserted his teeth in my foot at Rome. Again Stunica, though often forbidden, has sent out his pamphlets, and has made me out to be a follower of Luther whether I will or not. I am in bad case if I am to be torn to pieces by both sides. It was more than enough that I had to fight with the hydra. I know and bear in mind that your Eminence persuaded me in all kindness and felt it to be for my own best interests that I should betake myself to Rome; and indeed I

[5] This letter is number 1410 in Allen's edition of the letters of Erasmus, and although in the *Opus epistolarum* which Erasmus himself issued in 1529 and in which he first printed this letter, he addressed it to Cardinal Matthew Schinner, Allen doubts that this is the name of the recipient. His main reason for this is that at this time Schinner had been dead two years, and that it would have been incredible that Erasmus had not heard of that fact. I am the more inclined to agree with him in his surmise that the recipient may have been Cardinal Campegio, because the tone of the letter is scarcely in keeping with the character of Schinner as we know it. He was more of a soldier than an ecclesiastic, and hence the deeply theological subjects that Erasmus discusses in this letter would be of greater interest to a man of the stamp of Campegio than to the more martial Schinner.

was in the act of doing so, but in the attempt I barely escaped from going to another world. And such is the nature of my malady that I must ever keep myself prepared for that event. I will try to reach Rome, however, when the weather becomes warmer, even if I die there; especially if you will assist me against those who, believe me, are seeking rather their private interests than consulting for the dignity of the Apostolic See. For what can be more pleasing to that faction than that Stunica should persuade the world, even if it be most false, that Erasmus agrees with Luther in everything?

For my part, I fail to see a single point on which I agree with him; and, moreover, the things which Stunica objects to were taken from books of mine which were published long before the name of Luther was ever heard of. Concerning the temporal power of the Pope I have never been in doubt; but whether it was acknowledged and exerted in the time of Jerome I have several times questioned, especially in the notes which I published on Jerome. But as I note here and there whatever seems to make for that opinion, so in like manner in my comments I note whatever facts seem to make for the opposite opinion. And in so many other places I call Peter the Prince of the Apostles, the Roman Pontiff, the Vicar of Christ, and the head of the Church, attributing to him the greatest power after Christ. Stunica ignores this, but only extracts from my writings material which he can twist into accusations against me. The bull of Leo and the edict of the Emperor fulminate not against what has gone before, but against what may occur in future. I have stated occasionally, concerning this Confession, that it seemed to me to have arisen from secret consultations; and when I say this I have in mind Confession such as it now is with all its adjuncts. And yet I admit that it must be received as though instituted by Christ, not denying at the same time that it was instituted by Christ, but only expressing some doubt. Of Matrimony I thus argue: that I admit acceptance on my part of Matrimony amongst the Sacraments so called, although the ancient theologians did not. And this I wrote seven years ago in my *New Testament.*

These are the principal charges of Stunica, in which there is nothing meriting such a commotion as this, especially when these things were written by me before anyone dreamed that Luther was going to appear, when I had asserted nothing positively, when I had always submitted my opinions to the judgment of the Church, when in my later editions I had either deleted or expressed more moderately many things which might seem to furnish to the unrighteous their opportunity; and an opportunity is all they need. I do not contend that I may cause my doctrine to be approved by everybody; but I trust that goodly and fair-minded men will commend me. I earnestly desire the glory of Christ. I see on both sides things that displease me: on the one hand too much of the spirit of the world; on the other hand too much of

the spirit of sedition. If amid such turmoil I saw any better course of action to adopt, there is no doubt that I would have followed it. Basle, January 19, 1524.[6]

We see from this letter that from the Catholic standpoint Stunica had some justification for his suspicion of Erasmus' orthodoxy, since Erasmus here admits that his position on the subjects of Confession and Matrimony is not that held by other men, and that in many instances he had changed front since issuing his *New Testament* seven years before. It was just this mental attitude of his, compelling him as it did to drop germs of doubt into the minds of others as to the traditional and accepted dogmas of the Church, which naturally alarmed men like Lee and Stunica; for they feared, reasonably enough, that the uneducated and unthinking multitude might be led to adopt the mischievous dictum: *"Falsum in vno, falsum in omnibus."* Erasmus had prevailed on friends like the Cardinal of Sion to induce the Pope to stop Stunica's mouth, which that Pontiff effectually accomplished for his own lifetime by issuing a bull to that end; but immediately after his death, and before another Pope was elected, Stunica, who knew how Erasmus was seeking to nullify his efforts by what he deemed unfair means, stole a march on him by publishing his pamphlet during the papal interregnum. On the election of Adrian VI, Stunica asked permission to publish his work against Erasmus openly, but the new Pope, mindful of the old acquaintanceship that used to exist between himself and Erasmus in former days, would not at once consent. On Stunica's insisting that he could show innumerable and dangerous propositions in the published works of the great writer, the Pope began to lend him his ear; and Erasmus stated afterwards that he was just then in the greatest danger, had not death carried off Adrian after only a year's occupation of the chair of St. Peter. Again Stunica took advantage of the death of the Pope to issue another pamphlet even more incisive and detailed than the former one. This he entitled *Conclusions Especially False and Scandalous, which are found in the books of Erasmus of Rotterdam, and picked out thereof by Diego Lopez Stunica.* He points out in this pamphlet that Erasmus calls into question the primacy of St. Peter, the sacraments of Penance, Extreme Unction, and Matrimony, comments unfavorably on prayers and ceremonies, on scholasticism, and on the Religious Orders. It was in impotent anger at the publication of this last pamphlet that Erasmus wrote the letter to Cardinal Campegio just quoted. Shortly afterwards, he heard that his former acquaintance Giulio de' Medici had been elected to succeed Adrian VI. Here was a stroke of luck, and he immediately wrote the new Pontiff, who had taken the title of Clement VII, bespeaking his good offices in his favor as against Stunica. The letter is too long to be inserted here, but we will reproduce that part of it which refers to Stunica. After congratulating the new Pope on his acquired dignity, he goes on to inform him that nothing can swing him (Erasmus) over to the party of Luther, although he had been solicited

[6] Eras. Ep. 1410.

by kings, coaxed by learned friends, hounded by monks and theologians to take sides. Then he informs the Pope that Stunica is still raging against him with impunity, although he is doing so notwithstanding the edicts of the Cardinals, and contrary to the orders of Popes Leo and Adrian:

> Believe me, most Holy Father, those who are supporting this mountebank, a man created for just such mean calumnies, have little consideration for either the pontifical dignity or for the public tranquillity, but yield themselves to their own private hatreds and indulge themselves in this strange insanity.
>
> He [Stunica] has collected from all my writings, which I had published before the name of Luther was heard of, certain fragments which he corrupts and interprets in the worst sense, but so impudently that even in the absence of a reply from me any fair-minded reader would execrate the soul of such a man. I can find many things in the works of St. Jerome and St. Bernard, if this form of calumny were permissible. When I wrote those things, I never suspected in the least that the present state of the world would come to pass, because, had I known it, I would have passed such matters over in silence, or I would have written about them in some other way; not that they are impious, but that those who are wicked seize everything for their own purpose. Two years ago, for this reason, I erased many things in my last editions, in order not to give any opportunity to those people, and would willingly have changed other passages if anyone cared to admonish me fraternally.
>
> But of this I have written more at length to Cardinal Campegio, responding at the same time to Stunica's last calumnies. I have always submitted myself and my writings to the judgment of the Roman Church, and shall not object even if she shall pass unjust sentence on me. For I will endure anything rather than be seditious. But this is my sure confidence, that the justice of your Holiness will not suffer me to be given up to the insane hatreds of a few.
>
> I send to you as a pledge of my intention my *Paraphrase on the Acts of the Apostles,* which by chance has just been printed. I had destined this for the Cardinal of York, who for a long time has been my most loving patron. But, having now changed my mind, a book against Luther, on *Free Will,* which is now in my hands, shall be dedicated to him, and I think it will be more acceptable to him.[7]

Pope Clement did not appear to be much moved by this plea at that time, and Erasmus felt it necessary to reply at length to the serious charges which Stunica had made against him. He insinuated that Stunica was more actuated by vanity than by zeal in writing against him, which, the reader will remember, was the same charge he had made against Lee. But he did not now feel that this was a sufficient

[7] *Ibid.,* 1418.

line of defense, and went on to justify himself by reiterating his entire belief in the primacy of St. Peter, and the supreme authority of the Sovereign Pontiffs, stating in addition that his maintenance of this article of faith was the principal cause of the hatred which the Lutherans manifested towards him. On Confession he declared that he stood with the Church in making this sacrament obligatory, explaining that his only difficulty was to feel assured that Auricular Confession had been instituted by Christ, since he could not see how in the first ages of the Church one bishop with a few priests could have heard the confessions of a great multitude of people. He declares his belief that Matrimony is a sacrament, though Durandus, he says, maintained that the ancient theologians had their doubts in the matter. He insists that he approves of the ceremonies established by the fathers, and only criticizes those which are superstitious or absurd. And lastly and particularly, he proclaims his entire obedience and adhesion to the doctrines and authority of the Roman Church, and submits to her decisions in everything. Clement, who, like Leo and Adrian, did not take pleasure in seeing this really great scholar hounded and harassed in this manner, but who doubtless recognized his weaknesses and limitations, gave orders that Stunica should desist, threatening him with arrest and detention in case of disobedience.

It would seem, however, that there was nothing waspish in Stunica's pursuit of Erasmus; for seven years afterwards, when Stunica was nearing his end, he sent for Sepulveda, his old friend of the university days at Alcalá, and, handing him all his unpublished writings against Erasmus, begged him not to print them, but to send them to Erasmus so that he might profit by them if he so desired. Stunica died in 1530.

After this opponent had been silenced by Pope Clement, the discussion with Erasmus was taken up by another friend of Stunica's named Sancho Caranza, who had also been associated with him and Sepulveda at the University of Alcalá, and had possibly worked on the Complutensian edition of the Bible. He defended Stunica on three points in which the latter differed from Erasmus; but since they are deeply theological, and we make no professions in that science, we will not go into them.[8] Caranza treats Erasmus as an honorable opponent; and his pamphlet against him never descends to the plane of personalities. He admits the great services that Erasmus has done for literature in general, and with becoming modesty invites him to turn his vast ability against heretics and false Christians. Erasmus replied to him with equal moderation; but the edict of Pope Clement was still in force, and Caranza barely escaped a stay in the papal penitentiary.

In following up the criticism, both favorable and unfavorable, that his *New Testament* had encountered, we have accompanied Erasmus through his replies and counter-replies for several years in advance of our story, in order to give some continuity to this important chapter of his life. During his lifetime five editions of the *New Testament*

[8] *Desiderii Erasmi Apologia de tribus locis, quos ut recté taxatos a Stunica, defenderat Sanctius Caranza Theologus.* Rome, 1523.

were issued by him, each differing from the others in vital particulars. The first was purely scholarly and reflected the greatest credit on his marvelous stores of learning and his wonderful industry. The annotations contained nothing offensive or personal; but, when criticism began to assail him, he could not refrain from indulging in his fatal pastime, and we begin to notice offensive remarks about monks and theologians in all the following editions. This was the height of folly for a man so vulnerable as he, for it compelled him to waste time in writing apologies and diatribes that would have been better spent in higher forms of literature. He was so sensitive to adverse comment that the slightest remark which was unfavorable made him suffer acutely, a failing due, without doubt, to his intensely neurasthenic constitution. He could not help it, and this is undoubtedly the explanation of the wonderful patience exercised towards his idiosyncrasies by all his closest and most intimate friends.

About the time he was issuing the first edition of his *New Testament,* in February, 1516, he received a very flattering offer from Duke Ernest of Bavaria to accept a position in the newly founded University of Ingolstadt, at a salary of two hundred gold crowns, in addition to some lucrative benefices. In case of the refusal of this offer, the Duke besought him at least to come on a visit to the University, of which he was himself rector; and for that purpose he was forwarding him money to defray all his traveling expenses. It seems not to have interested Erasmus, for he declined the offer.

About this same time, as we have related, he was appointed a Councilor to Prince Charles, afterwards the famous Emperor Charles V. This honor was procured for him by his friend John Le Sauvage, Chancellor of Burgundy, who esteemed him highly. Erasmus, in return, dedicated to the young prince his next work, which was the *Education of a Christian Prince,* a very appropriate title under the circumstances.

An April 1, 1516, he wrote and signed his preface to that part of St. Jerome's works for which he was solely responsible. He had worked for many years on this great task; for we can trace his activities therein to 1498, when he was borrowing from Gaguin books to settle points of interest to him in Jerome. Thirteen years afterwards, we have the record of his lectures in Cambridge on Jerome's *Letters* and *Apology against Rufinus.* While he was thus engaged in research work on the subject, Badius, who had heard of it, started negotiations with him for its publication; but it was only when he reached Basle that he found the Amerbachs had been employed for some years in bringing out a complete edition of Jerome's work. A plan was agreed upon between them that Erasmus' labors should occupy the first four volumes of the projected edition, and that the whole work should appear in nine volumes. The plan was carried to a successful issue and was entirely completed in the summer of this year. As we have already seen, Erasmus dedicated his part of the work to Archbishop Warham, who certainly was deserving of this signal honor for the generosity that he had manifested towards Erasmus. He words it thus:

> Would that all princes were of the same mind as yourself, that, having put an end to these most insane and wretched tumults of war, they might turn their attention to instructing their people in the arts of peace, and might inflame with rewards the ardor of the learned to these most wholesome studies. Thus we would see in a short time throughout the entire world what in a few years past has happened to your England, which, having for a long period been powerful in men and wealth, has recently by her love of religion, justice, and culture, as also by her affection for every kind of ancient literature, become so refined, so eminent, and so flourishing, and this most especially due to your efforts, that your island, remote from the world, can arouse to enthusiasm for ennobling studies countries even the most cultured.[9]

In 1470 a splendid edition of St. Jerome's works, as far as typography is concerned, was issued in Rome, under the pontificate of Paul II; but since the Greek and Hebrew words had been omitted, and no distinction had been drawn between the genuine and the spurious passages, the need of a more satisfactory edition appealed to humanistic scholars. This lack Erasmus had aimed to fill, and in many respects, if not in all, no man was better qualified for the task. What his intentions were in regard to this undertaking we may glean from a letter which he wrote to Antony, Abbot of St. Bertin:

> . . . I am attempting a huge task, one worthy of Apollo, I might say, in restoring to the best of my ability the works of St. Jerome, which, partly by the lack of education, and partly by an insufficient knowledge of Greek antiquities and literature, have become undecipherable, lopped off, mutilated, erroneous, and full of fictions; and not only will I restore them, but I will illustrate them with notes so that every reader will recognize that he has with him the real Jerome whom the ecclesiastical world holds to be almost perfect in both sacred and profane knowledge; a man who can be read by all, but understood only by the erudite.[10]

This work had really cost him a greater effort than the *New Testament;* and so absorbing was the labor and so intense the necessary research, not to speak of the attendant expense, that according to his own testimony it cost St. Jerome less trouble to compose his works than it cost Erasmus to restore them to their pristine purity. As in the *New Testament,* he had the invaluable assistance of Reuchlin, Kuno of Nuremburg, Gregory Reisch, Rhenanus, and others; and nothing was left undone to make it the definitive edition of this great father of the Church. In a sense it was a labor of love, for it was the result of his lifelong admiration for St. Jerome. As he admirably puts it:

> Jerome delighted me in my young days, and charmed me in my manhood; but never has he pleased me more than now when I have just reread him. Immortal God, how entirely disgusted am I with myself when I perceive the sanctity of the man breathing forth from

[9] Eras. Ep. 396, ll. 377-87. [10] *Ibid.,* 149.

his writings, when I view his ardor in study, when I behold his admirable knowledge and retention of the contents of the Sacred Scriptures! What a wealth of eloquence, what a vigor of mind in a man so aged![11]

In the above quotation we catch Erasmus in one of his moments of exaltation, when St. Jerome and not Valla is in the ascendant. But it was only for an instant, and it was only the intellectual part of Jerome that so moved him. Where Jerome speaks of his flight to the burning desert, of his emaciated limbs that were clothed in sackcloth, of his parched and blackened skin, of his days and nights passed in tears and groaning, of his temptations of the flesh when he had to cast himself down on his face and implore God to mitigate his sufferings, of his prolonged fastings and mortifications of the body, and of his final victory over himself so that he could lift up his soul to God in praise and thanksgiving—during all this Erasmus remains unmoved. When Jerome speaks of his travels through Egypt to visit the monks and hermits of the desert, when he tells of his calling on the holy monk Didymus and the sublime instructions on the monastic life that he received from him, when he recounts what he found in the monasteries of the East, and when he relates the story of his own monastery in Bethlehem, we look in vain for any note of admiration in Erasmus. But, feeling at times the appalling contrast between himself and St. Jerome on this one subject, he hastened to justify himself on the score of his opposition to the monastic institution, insisting that monks were different in St. Jerome's day, and closing his eyes to the fact that if there were Didymuses then there were also Jovinians. So, as we have said, it was an intellectual appeal that summoned him to the task of editing the works of St. Jerome, and he performed the arduous task ably and admirably.

It was the custom in the monasteries for one monk to read aloud the text of some manuscript, and for the other monks to take down the words at his dictation. It was in this way that copies of the ancient classics were multiplied before the age of printing, and the system had the defect of all systems which are subject to the errors and weaknesses of human nature. For instance, the hearing of some of the monks was less acute than that of the others, and a word or phrase might be lost here and there. Again, all the monks did not have equal command of the languages involved, and bad spelling might come in to vitiate an otherwise good copy. Other sources of possible error in copying will occur to each reader; and we may easily admit that the matter of errors arising is not so strange as that there were so few of them under the circumstances. Erasmus recognized the difficulty of the task which he had set himself, and proceeded at once to correct the corrupted text, to restore the omitted words and phrases by comparing various ancient codices, to throw light on ancient customs which had now become obsolete, and to illustrate with notes everything which might be obscure to the ordinary reader. All this he did, and it is

[11] See dedication of Vol. II to Warham.

lamentable that some of his critics judged his work not by what he had accomplished, but by what had escaped his attention. Writers like Marianus Victorius, who also brought out some years afterwards an edition of St. Jerome, dissected that of Erasmus unmercifully, stating that there were to be found therein more than fifteen hundred passages which he had left uncorrected, and that his notes betrayed ignorance of the subject. Such things are possible in a work of this magnitude, but the above-mentioned writer fails to tell us of the countless thousands of passages that Erasmus did correct, nor does he tell us of the invaluable help that he himself must have received for his own edition by a perusal of that of his learned and illustrious predecessor. There was no lack of scholarship in the work of Erasmus; but there were ever and always the same unfortunate opinions expressed that had in some measure neutralized the great benefit derivable from his annotations on the New Testament. It was in this work that he ridiculed pious pilgrimages as being of no benefit; it was here that he maintained Arianism to be only a difference of opinion and not really a heresy; it was here he claimed that the Arians of Jerome's time were better educated in religious matters than were the orthodox Christians who were their contemporaries. The utterance of these opinions at such a time of storm and stress in religious circles was most unwise, since they were but opinions, at best, and only served to furnish his adversaries with newer and better ammunition. So great was the clamor, and to such a pitch of intensity did it rise, that twenty-one years after the death of Erasmus his *St. Jerome,* with others of his works, was publicly burned at Rome by order of Pope Paul IV. And let us not come to the hasty conclusion that this was done entirely from prejudice or personal animosity, for Paul IV had been one of his own intimate friends and a man whom Erasmus greatly admired. He had met him in England when, as Cardinal Caraffa, he had been the legate of Pope Leo X. He had explained to the legate what his intentions were regarding the bringing out of a better edition of St. Jerome, and was greatly encouraged by him in this undertaking, by both advice and money.[12] Erasmus' estimate of Caraffa may be learned from what he later wrote about him:

> How persuasive the wonderful eloquence of the man! Who is there that would not be moved by the power of so upright and dignified a prelate? Who is there who would not become more zealous beholding the rare piety of this excellent man? For to an unusual skill in the three languages, and to an excellence in all the sciences, but more especially that of theology, he has added, though still a young man, so much integrity and holiness of life, so much modesty, and so much kindness combined with remarkable dignity, that he is a high ornament to the Roman See, and shows to all the English a perfect example of every virtue by which they all can model themselves.[13]

Strange anomaly of fate, that this man who had bid him Godspeed

[12] Eras. Ep. 377.

[13] *Ibid.,* 335, ll. 253-62.

in his efforts to restore St. Jerome should afterwards have been the one to condemn it to the flames;[14] not that Erasmus had not given us back this great Father of the Church restored and freed from the cobwebs of ages, but that he had spoiled it all by injecting into his notes thereon his own personal, unorthodox, and doubtful opinions on subjects concerning which the entire attitude of the Church was against him—at least negatively. But enough of this subject. He was meditating another flying trip to England, on serious matters bent: what these were we shall shortly proceed to disclose.

[14] As Pope Paul IV.

CHAPTER IV

FINAL DISPENSATION FROM LEO X

Bound for England, he had left Basle where he had so long toiled on the *New Testament* and *St. Jerome,* and had arrived at Antwerp. It had been intimated to him by several that the Chancellor of Burgundy, John LeSauvage, whom we have already mentioned, was meditating more kindnesses towards him, and that it would be advisable for him to cultivate this powerful official by every means possible. He consequently proceeded to put this wise advice into effect, and announced himself as about to pay him a visit at the earliest moment. This elicited from the Chancellor the following direct proposition:

> Hail, Erasmus, most learned of men. You will do well to betake yourself hither [Brussels] at the first available opportunity; for, if you are sure that you will remain in this country, and here in laudable leisure will live quietly and comfortably (something which you have not been able to do anywhere else without great difficulty), I will cause at once to be conferred upon you a prebend or canonry at Courtrai. Nor will that be the only thing which you may expect from the established generosity and certain anticipation of our lord, his Catholic Majesty. Farewell, from Brussels, July 8, 1516.[1]

This was certainly something tangible, and he hastened to fulfil the Chancellor's wishes in the matter. But, having once secured the benefice, he did as he had done with the Aldington benefice, that is, he exchanged it for a pension to be paid him out of the income of this prebend. We have already explained that he was forced to do these things on account of the illegitimacy of his birth, which prevented him from holding benefices. The second inducement which the Chancellor held out to him to make him settle down in his own country turned out to be the offer of a bishopric, to which Charles V had nominated him. This, as it chanced, was not in the gift of Charles, but pertained solely to the Pope. On learning this fact, Charles had letters written to the Pope begging him to ratify the nomination. This furnished Erasmus some food for thought, as he had just sent Pope Leo a request which, if granted, would give him more real pleasure than a thousand bishoprics. Ammonius, whom he had made cognizant of the secret of his birth, and who had arranged all the needful preliminaries through his countryman and patron Sylvester Gigli, Bishop of Worcester, and English agent of the papal court resident in Rome, had been mainly instrumental in persuad-

[1] Eras. Ep. 436.

ing Erasmus to rid himself of his ecclesiastical disabilities once and for all. He had dwelt on the fact that Gigli continued to assure him of the great pleasure that the Pope had derived from Erasmus' works, and that Leo entertained the best dispositions towards him, going on to say that now was the time for him to make his appeal to the Pope. But the secret that Erasmus had guarded in his heart of hearts for so many years he could not nor would not entrust to paper; so we find him running over to England that he might speak with Ammonius, and that together, and without other interference, they might advance this great business. What these difficulties were that weighed on him so heavily we have already alluded to in more than one place. First there was the disability caused by the fact of his illegitimate birth, which prevented him from canonically receiving any benefice whatsoever in the Church. Then there was the fact that he had been elevated to the priesthood, which is forbidden by canon law to this class of unfortunates.[2] Also, his besetting fear that some day he might be forced to resume his obligations to his Order gave him not a moment's peace of mind, and now was the opportunity offered him to accomplish these several objects. After speaking with Ammonius on arriving in England, and devising with him the measures to be pursued, he went to spend a few days with friends, but on his return found that Ammonius had been summoned to join the retinue of the king, who had gone hunting probably for a week. Erasmus chafed at this delay but could not help himself; so he wrote Ammonius as follows:

> I trust this hunting will be as lucky for you as it is unlucky for me; for, in the first place, it takes away the king from me, and, besides that, it has prevented my access to the Cardinal for some days. Moreover, I was about to captivate Ursewick with a present of my *New Testament,* and was intending to ask him for the horse which he had promised me by letter. When I expect to meet him on Monday, he has, conveniently for himself, gone off hunting, not to return for a week, and so that tunny-fish has escaped me. Lastly, the hunting has snatched you from me, so that I shall have to commit to writing the matters about which I wished to speak with you. Please sign the letter which I have written to the Pope about my boyhood.[3] To me it seems very poorly phrased; so, if you think it can be improved, go over it anew, and describe the affair more carefully, adding this to your other kindnesses. I leave my welfare in your keeping. I cannot urge you more earnestly, for I trust you entirely; nor do I promise you a magnificent recompense in return, since I prefer to express my thanks in deeds, not words, if I shall be able. And I feel sure the matter we are engaged in will succeed, not only because it is in the hands of a man most dear to me, but also that it is in charge of Ammonius, who is most lucky in my affairs. Farewell.[4] c. August 14, 1516.

[2] It is evidently probable that the Bishop of Utrecht had not been informed of this disqualification before he ordained Erasmus.

[3] This was the Grunnius letter on pages 9 *sqq.* of Vol. I.

[4] Eras. Ep. 451.

So behold Erasmus and Ammonius putting their heads together and drafting in unexceptional Latin, first, a letter to Pope Leo aimed to clear the way and bespeak his favor; and second, a letter to the Apostolic secretary whom he styles Lambert Grunnius; but that is a fictitious name, possibly Sadoleti being the one addressed.[5] This latter document, which purports to give an account of a young boy too early immured in a monastery against his will, and which thinly veils his own history, we have already given at the beginning of our work.[6] The letter to Leo we will now reproduce in part:

> Most Holy Father. I shall consider myself extremely fortunate if your Holiness will only pardon my temerity and persistence in that I have dared to trouble with my letter your Pontifical Highness, and, what is still more august, the incomparable eminence of Leo. But I perceive that my audacity has turned out most fortunately for me, since your more than paternal kindness has surpassed both my hopes and my desires, as you have sent me two Briefs, in one of which you distinguish me and my writings by the most ample and honorable testimony, and in the other you commend me to His Royal Majesty [Henry VIII] no less lovingly than earnestly. To have merited the approbation of the Eternal Deity is the supreme honor, but of a surety I deem it next to this to have been approved by the praises of the Supreme Pontiff, and all the more so that it is the praise of Leo, that is, of him who adorns the highest position among mortals with every sort of virtue and learning.
>
> Had these Briefs been delivered to me earlier, when I was staying at Basle, no perils of the roads would have availed to deter me from hastening to your blessed feet. But now that I have returned to my own country, increasing years somewhat weigh on me, the kindness of my Prince retains me, and the remarkable affection of my fellow-countrymen towards me holds me here. Moreover, the most illustrious Prince Charles, His Catholic Majesty, the incomparable luminary and ornament of this age, in whose realms I was born and by whose father Philip I was formerly not only known but appreciated, has most generously invited me to come back here in consideration of an annual salary, something which I was neither seeking nor expecting; and, when I had scarcely returned, he gave me a benefice as ample as it was honorable. Now I have ascertained in ways that are unmistakable how much of the early favor to me on the part of his most serene highness the King of England, how much good will for me on the part of the Cardinal of York, and how much affection for me on the part of the Archbishop of Canterbury, are due to the commendation of your Holiness. This was the more pleasing to me, and of more avail with them, in that it was not extorted by my entreaties, but was given by you of your own accord.

[5] During my researches in the Vatican Library, Cardinal Ehrle was kind enough to look up this matter of Lambert Grunnius, and was unable to find any trace of such a name among those of the Apostolic scribes and secretaries of that time.

[6] See Vol. I, pp. 9 *sqq.*

Yet, while I perceive that I owe so much to your Holiness, I eagerly desire to owe you more. Yes, it will especially delight me to receive all of my good fortune and the sum of my happiness from Leo alone. It is my design that some part of my felicity shall be willingly attributed to yourself. What that is, the reverend father in Christ, the Bishop of Worcester, permanent legate of the all-unconquered King of England at your Holiness's court, will explain to you personally, and Andreas Ammonius, your Holiness's nuncio in England, will elucidate by letter. In which matter I do not doubt that I shall experience that goodness which the generosity of your nature towards me (in which you resemble especially Christ whose vice-regent you most deservedly are) as well as the learning of your Holiness promise in addition; and particularly since it is an affair of that sort which pertains not so much to my own dignity, to which you are openly favorable, as to the public benefit of the world for whose interests you are watchful. For the obtaining of this favor I could have made use of the commendation of the highest kings, but I preferred to owe to your kindness alone whatever of favor there is in it. Now, although I know that this service is greater than can be repaid by any efforts of man, and the greatness of your rank is such that it needs thanks from no one, yet it shall be my duty to strive with hands and feet that you shall not seem to have conferred so excellent a benefaction on a man either entirely unworthy, little mindful, or little grateful. . . .

Farewell, your Holiness, whom may the great Christ preserve unharmed as long as possible for the restoring and spreading of His religion, and for assisting the affairs of mortals. London, August 9, 1516.[7]

At the same time Ammonius, in his capacity of papal nuncio, wrote Pope Leo to the following effect:

Most Holy Father. For a considerable time now nothing has occurred that seemed to me to require that I should write to your Holiness, pinnacle of the human race. Now I seem to have a good cause which emboldens me to do so in order that I may render Erasmus, already especially esteemed by your Holiness on account of his erudition, still more estimable in your sight, a thing which I think ought to be done by all who are lovers of learning, to the end that he may be able to devote himself with a serener mind to literature, and your eternal Holiness may have such a priest most devoted to your Highness, not that your Highness can be exalted by any man's praises, but because your Highness can be no better propitiated by any other offering than by the praise of a priest, pure in heart, and in his natural qualities especially close to God. And this confidence in my hopes arises from the benignity of your eminent Holiness, who are accustomed to lend willing ears to the prayers of even the lowly, and to favor learning not alone by your countenance, but by gold and silver. But it is not money that Erasmus seeks,

[7] Eras. Ep. 446.

but only that you will gratify him with a dispensation, which, although it is an unusual thing that he asks, I deem him most worthy of on account of the fact that he is a rare genius, and so the favor would be lacking in value to him were it not a rare one. His reverend lordship the Bishop of Worcester will explain more fully at the feet of your Holiness both his appeal and my own.[8]

After being on the anxious seat for several weeks without hearing a word from Rome, Erasmus, who had returned to Brabant, finally received a letter from Ammonius which gave him great hopes. The reference to his having come to life again in this letter is explained by the fact that rumors of his death had recently been prevalent in Rome:

Ammonius to Erasmus. Bearing another sealed letter for you, the nuncio from Rome arrived with a letter from the Bishop of Worcester, who sends you his best regards, commending himself to you, and saying that you have come to life again at Rome, for you had been long mourned as dead. About your own affairs he writes that the Pontiff gladly read both your letter and mine, and heard your petition, but had deferred the matter until his return. To obtain a mental rest he has gone more than sixty miles from Rome, whither he is said to be about to return, however, on the fifth of November. The Bishop of Worcester is sure that he will obtain everything you ask for, but has to placate the Datary with a sop so that he will not snarl too much, but for what reason he does not state. But I have written to him [the Bishop], not to mind the expense, and that I will at once pay here whatever he may incur there. Therefore there is no reason to fear any delay; only wait until about the last of November or a little later, and you shall have your wish. Farewell. London, October 22, 1516.[9]

The old adage, "Hope deferred maketh the heart sick," was most true in the present instance, since Erasmus never ceased for a moment to importune Ammonius for news from Rome:

Ill luck attend this absence of the Pope which has delayed my happiness. Believe me, dear Ammonius, now have I let go my anchor, now is every die cast. If it shall turn out contrary to my wishes, I am done for. If it succeeds, I shall owe it all to your kindness and that of the Bishop of Worcester; but, if not, I shall recognize therein my familiar and too well-known evil genius.[10]

A month after this time Ammonius heard from the Bishop of Worcester, and hastened to inform Erasmus that the Pope was wonderfully well disposed towards him. The Bishop writes to tell what the Pope has in mind to do for Erasmus, but is uncertain that what the Pontiff offers will meet Erasmus' wishes. Hence he writes for categorical instructions on how to proceed, and what specifically to ask for. He suggests that Erasmus write to the Pope more in detail, and promises that he will second the missive with all his influence.[11] From Erasmus'

[8] *Ibid*, 466. [9] *Ibid.*, 479. [10] *Ibid.*, 483. [11] *Ibid.*, 498.

next letter to Ammonius, written the following month, we learn that our eager subject has carried out these instructions, and has sent another appeal, differently couched, to Ammonius, to be by him dispatched to the Bishop, who is to present it to Leo. Erasmus is beginning to fear that the Pope will be annoyed by all this importunity, but feels that the risk must be taken, ending his letter to Ammonius as follows:

> Again and again I beseech you, my dear Andreas, that this affair which we are engaged in be hastened as much as possible, and I will show you that you will have no cause to call me ungrateful.[12]

Again there was a long and dispiriting wait, while he tarried at Antwerp watching for a courier that never seemed to come. Impatiently he writes to Ammonius, his sole resource:

> Erasmus to Ammonius. . . . I have long been awaiting the saving oracle. If the affair does not succeed, then Erasmus is as dead as a doornail, and it only remains for you to write my epitaph. Indeed I should have preferred to go to Rome twice over than to have been tortured by this long anxiety. I do not say this to minimize your kindness, for I know that the delay is not due to your wishes, but to my own bad luck.[13]

The neurasthenic nature of Erasmus was now suffering acutely from this long delay, something which individuals of that class bear badly. We can almost see a trace of suspicion, as if he imagined he were being duped. Ammonius in his next letter reproaches him for his want of patience and Erasmus replies as follows:

> I know not if I deserve your reproaches, but certainly you console me most lovingly and most eruditely. Otherwise I might have replied that you would feel different were you in my place. But if all men were as blind to the faults of Erasmus as you, he would be far less unhappy. For your kindness towards me, or your affection rather, so God love me, I am ashamed to thank you. For it seems to me that this service of yours requires more than ordinary thanks. And what can I do in return? And yet I will strive to do so if only life be spared me. . . . Farewell, dear Ammonius, and hasten to save your thrice wretched Erasmus.[14]

And his friends certainly must have had to shut their eyes frequently to his faults, as he himself observes above, for four days afterwards he receives the good tidings that his petition is granted. Immediately, instead of rejoicing, as ordinary men would do, he becomes suspicious that he is being exploited by the rapacity of Roman officials; so he again writes to Ammonius:

> Erasmus to Ammonius. . . . I have received a letter on behalf of the Pope, and likewise one from the Bishop of Worcester, a very friendly one, but plainly smelling of extortion, inasmuch as it exaggerates what has been obtained, and complains of the hard-

[12] *Ibid.*, 505. [13] *Ibid.*, 539. [14] *Ibid.*, 551.

heartedness of the Datary. He encloses a copy of the Brief sent to you, but changed, it appears, in accordance with my emendation. And he adds that I must appear before you, but let me know as quickly as possible if that be necessary, for I loathe that Channel. Yet I will do it, and excel Theseus whom Vergil represents as going and returning so often, so that I may perform my duty in person. But, if this is not necessary, write what you wish me to do, and how much money I must pay, consulting Sixtin meanwhile as to whether the Brief is correct or not, for he is long aware of Erasmus' unlucky birth. Dear Ammonius, most generous of all men whom I have hitherto known, when I shall learn your intention with regard to me, I shall be able to recompense you, or at least to acknowledge my obligations to you; and if, throwing everything else aside, I do not work for that end, I shall not dissuade you from inscribing the name of Erasmus amongst the most ungrateful.[15]

So at last the coveted dispensation from the Pope was received by Ammonius, and he summoned Erasmus to England in order that, in his office of papal nuncio, he could free him from all his ecclesiastical disabilities in accordance with the Pope's Brief. Ammonius was a noble soul; and if there was in the world one person who truly rejoiced in Erasmus' happiness, it was he. We have not the exact date of Erasmus' going to England for the above purpose, but it was about April 1, 1517. This was his last visit to England.

We will now give transcripts from the papal documents which finally assured him that the dream of his life was at last accomplished, that at length he could go with impunity wherever he listed without being accosted by any and every Canon Regular and charged with throwing aside the habit of that Order without permission, the heinousness of which offense in those times we of to-day can hardly realize. No longer could he be challenged on the street and smirched with the epithet of a runaway monk, and no longer need he live in dread that some day he might be compelled to return to Steyn. That depression which had hung over him like a dark cloud was at length dissipated, and he was fearful no more. And last, but by no means least, he could now hold benefices, titles, and property, the revenues of which he was no longer liable to be compelled to turn over to the superiors of his Order, in accordance with his early vow of poverty. In a word, of the three vows of chastity, obedience, and poverty which he took at the time of his religious profession, he had now by the Pope's dispensation been relieved of the latter two, and was henceforth regarded as a simple priest, with no regular duties, and subject nominally to the Bishop of Utrecht who had ordained him. The Pope's letter to him personally runs as follows:

Leo X to Erasmus. Beloved son, health and the Apostolic benediction. Your honorable life and character, your rare erudition and your eminent good qualities, which are testified to not only by the

[15] *Ibid.*, 552.

monuments of your studies which are everywhere celebrated, but also by the approbation of men of the greatest learning, and have been commended to us by the letters of these illustrious princes the King of England, and His Catholic Majesty, induce us to honor you with especial and unique favor. Hence we freely grant your petition, and will show our further kindness towards you when either you shall point out the occasion or chance will bring it forth, judging it proper that your holy industry, exerted assiduously for the public good, should by worthy rewards be stimulated to greater efforts. Given at Rome, January 26, 1517, and in the fourth year of our pontificate.[16]

The dispensation:

Leo X [to Andreas Ammonius, Nuncio to the English Court from the Court of Rome]. Beloved son, health and the Apostolic benediction. You have caused to be explained to us recently that there is at present a certain man of eminent learning, who in the time of his boyhood, by those who had the care of him, was put into a monastery of Canons Regular, where he remained through threats, shame, and poverty, rather than of his own free will, until he made the profession usual to the canons of said monastery. And since, although he suffers from a defect of birth, being born of an illicit and, as he fears, an impure and condemned connection, he was advanced to the holy order of priesthood with the permission of his Superior, and being invited by the Bishop of Cambrai, with the permission of his Ordinary and his Superiors, he followed the study of literature in divers universities and became a most learned man; and whereas at length, not desirous thereof but compelled thereto by occasion, he first concealed, and soon laid aside entirely the habit which is wont to be worn by the said Canons, and for several years has gone about in the dress of a secular priest, and still continues to do so, thus incurring the charge of apostasy and the other ecclesiastical judgments, censures, and penalties imposed by the laws of the said Order on such as presume to do this thing; and whereas he earnestly desires for the peace of his soul and the avoidance of greater scandal, to remain in said secular habit, to be absolved from his apostasy, and the other judgments, censures, and penalties, and to be enabled to hold any and all benefices whatsoever, and that it may be granted to him not to have to make mention of this *Brief* concerning his defect of birth and this dispensation when applying for benefices; and whereas you have supplicated us to deign to grant to you, of our Apostolic kindness, license and power of absolving him, and also of giving a dispensation and indulgence in the matters aforesaid: Therefore, we, moved by the character of the man of which we have heard, and by this his petition, hereby, of our Apostolic authority, grant you license and power, so that, if said Canon, whose name and surname, qualities and defect [of birth], we have set down, shall humbly entreat it, you may absolve him in ecclesiasti-

[16] *Ibid.*, 519.

cal form from his apostasy and the above mentioned judgments, censures, and penalties, by our authority exercised for this once only, and shall enjoin on him for his fault salutary penances and other injunctions which shall be formally imposed on him, and, having absolved him on account of the aforesaid irregularity, shall dispense him from any judgments, censures, and penalties which he may have contracted on account of celebrating Mass, or performing the other divine offices, or by otherwise taking part therein, not, however, in contempt of the keys, and that he may dwell outside of the aforesaid monastery in places suitable and proper for that purpose, and in other ways shall lead a suitable life as long as he lives, and shall wear the sign only of his former habit of a Canon Regular under a suitable dress of a secular priest; and it shall be freely permitted to him to accept and rightfully retain all ecclesiastical benefices whatsoever, whether secular or pertaining to any Order, as well as secular canonries and prebends, dignities, positions of rank, administrations or offices, even if they are cures and elective offices in cathedrals and metropolitan or collegiate churches, or perpetual vicarages of the same, also regular offices of prior and sub-prior and abbot, and even monastic positions, involving care of souls and elective; providing that such are otherwise canonically conferred on him, or he is elected to them, or he is presented to them, or in any other way appointed to them and installed in them; and you shall remove from him every mark or stain of disability or infamy contracted by him by reason of the aforesaid circumstances; and by our Apostolic authority we grant you license and faculty that you may freely and lawfully be able to extend to him the indulgence that hereafter in any Brief concerning favor or justice requested by him or conceded to him by the Apostolic See or its legates he is not bound to make mention of the aforesaid defect and dispensation, even if otherwise he may have fraudulently obtained any dispensation from any cause by reason of such misrepresentation in the matters before set down, nor that he is a Canon Regular; and this Brief is by no means to be considered surreptitious or invalid, but shall be valid in all things and for all things just as if he had been of legitimate birth; notwithstanding the provincial and synodal constitutions and apostolic ordinances of Otto and Ottoboni of good memory, legates of the Apostolic See in the kingdom of England, as well as the statutes of the aforesaid churches, monasteries, and Orders, though validated by oath, apostolic confirmation, or any other binding circumstance, granted though they may have been by apostolic privilege or indult: Holding the tenor of all of them to have been sufficiently made manifest in these presents, and that otherwise they shall remain in full force, for this one occasion we derogate from them both as to the aforesaid defect and to the other things to the contrary whatsoever.

Given at St. Peter's at Rome, under the Fisherman's ring, January 26, 1517, and in the fourth year of our pontificate. Ia. Sadoletus.

And I Andreas Ammonius, Collector, etc., of our aforesaid most

holy master, Pope Leo X, in the kingdom of England, do absolve in due ecclesiastical form Erasmus of Rotterdam, here petitioning humbly to us, from this sentence of excommunication and from the other ecclesiastical censures which he has incurred by laying aside the habit of his Order, and by being guilty of apostasy in going about for several years in a secular dress; and we do, by virtue of the faculty and power above mentioned which has been given us by the Apostolic authority, in the same way grant him dispensation in all and for all. In testimony of which thing I have written these presents with my own hand in the house of my prebend in the chapel of St. Stephen at Westminster, the ninth day of April, 1517. And I have summoned John Sixtin, Doctor of Canon and Civil Law, who was present at the time of the aforesaid writings, to confirm and subscribe them with his signature.

And I John Sixtin, Doctor of Canon and Civil Law, because I was present at the absolution and dispensation in all and for all aforesaid, when they were granted as aforesaid by the above-mentioned Collector in this year, day, and place, and have seen and heard them to have been so done, being summoned and requested, do hereby sign my name with my own hand in faith and testimony of the above writings. John Sixtin.[17]

There is a peculiar circumstance connected with this Brief of Pope Leo, that on the same date we have another Brief issued by him to the same general effect, but differing in the phraseology. It is probable that Sadoleti was so desirous of satisfying the wishes of Erasmus, that he sent to Ammonius the Brief in two forms, so that he could absolve Erasmus according to the one which would give him the most gratification. We have no means of knowing which one Ammonius used, but for purposes of comparison we will give the second Brief. It is also possible that, to make assurance doubly sure, Ammonius first read to him each Brief in turn, and then absolved him according to the tenor of both.

Beloved son, health and the Apostolic benediction. Your honorable life and character, and the other laudable merits of probity and virtue on account of which you are commended to us by trustworthy testimony, induce us to reward you with special favors and graces. Hence it is that we, wishing to accord you the gracious favor for which our most beloved son in Christ, Henry VIII, the illustrious King of England has humbly supplicated as a pleasing and acceptable favor to himself, do hereby absolve you, and by the tenor of this instrument hold you henceforth free from every sentence, censure, and penalty of excommunication, suspension, and interdict, and other ecclesiastical sentences, censures, and penalties inflicted on you by the law or by man, from any cause or occasion, if you are in any way involved in such, but only up to the accomplishment of these presents respectively: And as a special gift of grace, of our Apostolic authority and according to the tenor of these presents, we grant

[17] *Ibid.*, 517.

you a dispensation so that you may be able lawfully and freely to hold ecclesiastical benefices with and without care of souls, whatsoever, as many as, and of whatever kind they may be, even though they are two parochial churches or their perpetual vicarages, chantries, free chapels, hospices, or the annual offering for anniversary masses which is wont to be assigned to the secular clergy for a perpetual ecclesiastical benefice, dignities, positions in monasteries, administrations or cathedral offices, even though they be metropolitan or collegiate churches, or shall be major and principal, and shall have the care of souls and be elective; if they otherwise be conferred on you canonically, or you are elected to them, or you are presented to them, or otherwise promoted to them, and are inducted therein; also at the same time to hold incompatibles and to retain them as long as you live, and together or in succession to give them up absolutely or by way of exchange as often as it pleases you, and in place of that or those things which you have parted with similarly to receive and hold freely and lawfully, as long as you like, another or other things similar or dissimilar, whatsoever, as many, and of whatsoever nature they may be, up to the amount of one thousand gold ducats in pontifical money, provided that they are not among the incompatibles, except the two parochial churches or their perpetual vicarages; and this notwithstanding the general and special constitutions and ordinances of the general council or any other Apostolic councils whatsoever; as also of those of Otto and Ottoboni the legates of the Apostolic See, of good memory, and what is published in provincial and synodal councils, as also the statutes and customs of churches in which perhaps there may be incompatible offices of this sort, no matter if confirmed by oath, Apostolic decree, or any other sanction, and everything to the contrary notwithstanding; provided that such incompatible benefices shall not by this instrument be divested of their obligations, and that the care of souls therein shall by no means be neglected, if such be imminent. Given at St. Peter's in Rome, under the seal of the Fisherman's ring, January 26, 1517, and of our pontificate the fourth. Ia. Sadoletus.

To our beloved son Erasmus Rogerii, of Rotterdam, priest of the diocese of Utrecht.[18]

Tedious as the perusal of these documents may have been to our readers, we feel that they are important as showing Erasmus' relations to the Church authorities at this time, and especially to Pope Leo X. Moreover, they may have a value of their own in bringing to our notice the method of presenting petitions and how they are acted upon by the Roman Curia, as well as the circumspection used in passing them through so many hands, which certainly indicates attention and consideration. That it cost Erasmus money to obtain these great favors need cause no surprise, since that was the custom in all courts at that time.[19]

[18] *Ibid.*, 518.

[19] We believe it is still customary in many European courts to exact fees for the necessary clerical work in the giving of titles, not to mention that many baronetages in England are bestowed on large contributors to party funds.

After Ammonius, the person most instrumental in obtaining the petition was undoubtedly Gigli, Bishop of Worcester; and we have a letter from him to Erasmus felicitating him on the success of the affair, and proffering his further services in any way that Erasmus might desire to use them.

> Venerable and respected friend. It was very pleasing to me to have the occasion offered of gratifying you by my efforts, for I have always had a high regard for your singular learning and your eminent virtues; nor did I desire anything better than to show myself most devoted to your interests. So, having found this opportunity, I most willingly undertook your affair, many details of which I prosecuted before his Holiness our lord the Pope. Whereupon he has freely granted your petition, both out of his goodness and out of the singular and remarkable kindness with which he especially regards your eminent talents. Now you know that this has been brought about by the efforts of many persons; and, in truth, there were not lacking one or two who delayed it; but his Holiness the Pope having favored it at every stage, we have accomplished the entire affair according to your desires. It is not from any lack of diligence on my part that it was not finished sooner; but infirm health and the disturbances in the duchy of Urbino caused his Holiness the Pope considerable trouble, and were the cause that this matter was adjusted later than we wished. And now I give you my lasting thanks for the good estimation which I perceive from your most kind and agreeable letter you have entertained of me, which I ascribe wholly to your kindness and not to my merits. However, such as I am, believe me that I am most heartily at your service; and in whatsoever thing you think that I may be able to assist you or your friends, you may promise it to yourself just as if I were your own brother. Farewell and think kindly of me. Rome, January 31, 1517. Sylvester Gigli, Bishop of Worcester.[20]

Now let us see the letter of thanks which Erasmus sent to the Pope:

> Most Holy Father. How in every respect your incredible goodness and kindness have surpassed not only my deserts but even my desires! What my modesty prompted me to ask for so constrainedly and charily, your benignity has generously and abundantly indulged me in. Nor did your Holiness wish to conceal from me to whom I owed this favor, although I myself earnestly desired to owe it entirely to yourself. I was aware that his Catholic Majesty had commended me to you by letter, but concerning another suit, the thing taking place in my absence and even without my knowledge. Although I was indebted to the king of England on many other accounts, this one was entirely unknown to me up to the present.
>
> I know, yes, I know, your Holiness, what a grave and manifold burden of obligations I am carrying on my shoulders. Firstly, I must strive with might and main to so use this benefaction which your kindness has granted me, that it may be worthy of both the

[20] Eras. Ep. 521.

giver and the receiver. Then, I must endeavor in some measure to respond to the commendations of such illustrious princes, since you have wished to share my gratitude for your bounty with them. Lastly, I must see to it that I may make, I will not say a return (for who can make a return either to Christ or to the Pope who is nearest to Him?), but I must show by some manifestation of a grateful heart the magnitude of the gift which I have received. And at once I perceive how very difficult this is, since as much as the rank of the Roman Pontiff excels that of the rest of mortals, just so much does Leo excel the rest of the Roman Pontiffs; so that it is extremely difficult to add to the greatness of Leo who is in every way the greatest of them all. I know not if I shall be able to accomplish this; but I shall certainly so strive that all men may see nothing has been wanting in the effort except ability, providing my life is spared; and I desire no longer lease of life than will be necessary to consecrate to posterity the divine virtues and merits of Leo the Supreme Pontiff. He is more successfully wont to attempt arduous undertakings who attempts them willingly, and is fully aware of the difficulty of the task. For if powers equal to the task are lacking to me, I will entreat the additional assistance of learned men, of whom there is not one anywhere who does not confess himself deeply indebted to your kindness as the defender of the public peace, which was ever the fosterer of honorable learning. Meanwhile, it will delight me to felicitate myself personally, who have had the good fortune to be approved not only by the Sovereign Pontiff, but also by Leo, who by his own talents is the greatest among the great, and also publicly to congratulate this our age which we hope to be the golden age, if there ever was a golden age, in which, under your most happy auspices and most holy counsel, I behold three especial benefits are about to be restored to the human race, that truly Christian piety which has in many ways declined, the best learning, hitherto partly neglected and partly corrupted, and the public and perpetual peace of the world, the fountain and parent of piety and erudition. These will be the imperishable trophies of Leo X, which, consecrated to your eternal memory by the writings of learned men, will evermore illustrate your pontificate and your family. I pray the great God to perpetuate your designs, that having composed human affairs according to your wishes, and having remained with us as long as possible, you may at last enter Heaven. Brussels, c. April 4, 1517.[21]

If we may measure the satisfaction he felt at the favors received by the fulsome tone of his letter to the Pope, we may assume that he was at last perfectly content. Whether he was grateful or not we cannot say; but judging from the vindictiveness with which he pursued Pope Julius II, who had also granted him a dispensation at the solicitation of friends, we cannot be too sure of his gratitude. In order to see wherein the dispensation granted him by Pope Julius differed from that

[21] *Ibid.*, 566.

given him by Pope Leo X, we deem it useful to insert the Julian dispensation here for the purpose of comparison, prefacing its insertion with the remark that it was so unsatisfactory to Erasmus that he never used it:

Julius, by the grace of God Supreme Pontiff, to his beloved son Desiderius Erasmus, canon of the monastery of Steyn in Holland, of the Order of St. Augustine, in the diocese of Utrecht, health and the Apostolic benediction.

Your zeal for religion, your uprightness of life and habits, and other laudable qualities of probity and virtue by which you are commended to us by trustworthy testimony, induce us to grant you special favors and graces. Hence it is our wish that you who, as you allege, are suffering from a defect of birth, being the son of a single man and a widow, shall in consideration of your aforesaid merits enjoy our gracious favor; and we do hereby absolve you respectively from all and every excommunication, suspension, and interdict, as also all other ecclesiastical judgments, censures, and penalties inflicted on you by the law or by man from any occasion or cause, if you are involved in such, but only up to the accomplishment of these presents, and we hereby pronounce you absolved; and moved by your supplications in that respect, we grant you a dispensation lawfully to hold and keep any ecclesiastical benefice whatsoever, whether with the care of souls or without, such as are wont to be held by the secular clergy, even though it be a parochial church or its perpetual vicarages or chantries, a free chapel, a monastic hospice, or the annual offering for anniversary masses which is wont to be assigned to the same clergy for a perpetual ecclesiastical benefice, as also the increment, revenue, or profit lawfully derived from lay patrons or any one else whatsoever in the order of their annual value; provided, such are conferred on you canonically, or you are elected to them, or you are presented to them, or are otherwise promoted to them and are inducted therein; and we dispense you so that you may give them up simply or by way of exchange as often as you please, and further, that you may be able to receive and lawfully hold, in place of what you have given up, some similar or dissimilar church benefice, with care of souls or without, as aforesaid; notwithstanding the aforesaid defect, also the general or special constitutions and ordinances of the Council of Poitiers, and any other Apostolic Councils whatsoever, also those promulgated in the provincial or synodal councils of Otto and Ottoboni of good memory who were formerly legates of the Apostolic See resident in England, also the statutes and customs of the monastery of Steyn in Holland, of the Order of St. Augustine, in the diocese of Utrecht, of which Order you are a canon and, as you assert, are publicly professed in said Order, also your oath to said Order, validated by Apostolic confirmation or any other binding circumstance to the contrary, we, of our Apostolic authority, and by tenor of these presents, do grant you this dispensation as a special mark of favor. Let no one, therefore, infringe this absolution, etc. If anyone shall, etc. Given at

Rome at St. Peter's in the year of our Lord's incarnation the one thousand five hundred and fifth,[22] the fourth day of January, and in the third year of our pontificate. A. Colotius.[23]

There are two important differences between the dispensation of Julius and that of Leo. First, it is evident that Erasmus did not tell the entire facts about his birth, namely, that he was the son of a priest or, at least, of a man in the major orders of subdeaconship or deaconship, and of a widow. He prevaricated by saying that he was the son of a single man and a widow.[24] The obvious reason for this was his supersensitive nature which, though forced to the acknowledgment of illegitimacy, could not and would not permit him to admit the added stigma of being a priest's son. His principal reason for applying at all to the Pope for a dispensation was to be enabled to licitly hold benefices, as we have before explained. No sooner, however, had he obtained for that purpose the dispensation from Julius than he realized his mistake, knowing full well that there were still living at Gouda people who knew the real circumstances of his birth, and that in some inauspicious moment the truth might reach the Roman court; and that if in the meantime he had obtained benefices under these false presentations of the facts, he would not only be immediately stripped of them but would incur severe ecclesiastical censures for the deception practiced. The somewhat strained relations, moreover, existing between himself and his superiors at Steyn must also have made him hesitate before using a document whose terms they could easily ascertain by securing a copy from Rome. So, although he never gave up the quest for benefices, he was always careful to exchange them for cash annuities when obtained, as notably in the case of the Aldington benefice granted him by Archbishop Warham in 1512, and also the benefice of Courtrai given him by LeSauvage, the Imperial Chancellor, in 1516. The holding of such benefices could not be concealed from prying and envious eyes, while the receiving of an annual pension from the new incumbent need only be known to two or three people privately.[25]

That he was the son of a man in Holy Orders he finally admitted in

[22] This would be properly 1506 according to present reckoning.

[23] *Ibid.*, 187A. (This epistle, being discovered during the publication of Doctor Allen's work, will be found out of place, as an addendum, on p. xxix of volume three.)

[24] "de soluto genitus et vidua." (l. 5.)

[25] Allen, Vol. III, p. xxix, suggests that the differing accounts of the circumstances of Erasmus' birth in the two papal briefs might spring from fresh sources of information that had possibly been opened to him; but, while we admit the possibility, when we consider that Erasmus was already forty years old at the time he received the Julian dispensation, it is hardly probable that the entire story of his birth was not known to him at that late day. Moreover, it is more than probable that he knowingly concealed from Julius the fact that his father was a priest, or, to put it mildly, that he glossed that fact over by saying that his father was a single man and his mother a widow, which statement was more true than explanatory. Pope Leo, in granting his indulgence, alludes to this deception on the part of Erasmus in the following words: *etiam si alias dispensationem aliquam ex aliqua causa super praemissis ob illius surreptionem nulliter impetrasset.* (Eras. Ep. 517, l. 53.)

his petition to Leo X. In this connection we may quote from the *Decretals* of Gregory IX as follows:

> Under Alexander III in 1180, the following regulation was decreed:
>
> "If any clerics under the rank of subdeacons shall take to themselves wives, you shall compel them to give up their ecclesiastical benefices and retain their wives under ecclesiastical penalty. But if you know them to have taken wives when in the subdiaconate or other superior orders, you are called upon to compel them to dismiss their wives and to do penance for their fault under pain of suspension and excommunication.[26]
>
> "Let not the sons of priests, and others born in fornication, be promoted to Holy Orders, unless they become monks, or live regularly in a canonical community; but let them hold no office whatsoever." [27]

And this from the same source, addressed to a bishop:

> The honor of the Church is being extremely injured in your jurisdiction, because the sons of priests, and other of illegitimate birth, are promoted to dignities and presentations and other benefices having the care of souls, without an Apostolic dispensation. Therefore we command you to see to it that, such persons as aforementioned having been entirely removed from presentations, dignities, and benefices of this sort, these you shall cause to be bestowed upon suitable persons, through those to whom you know the conferring of the same rightly to pertain. And we strictly forbid anyone to presume differently.[28]

Hence we may accept as final the tradition left us by Cornelius Loos that Erasmus was "the son of the parish priest of the neighboring town of Gouda and his servant, whom he sent when pregnant to a city near by, in order that his offense might remain hidden." [29]

Having deceived Pope Julius as to the complete history of his birth, he began to fear for possible consequences in the future. The fierce light of publicity was now beginning to be shed on his antecedents *pari passu* with his increasing renown, and he dreaded the fact of his equivocation becoming known at Rome. At the same time, he wished to be in a position to enjoy canonically the benefices and other emoluments that were beginning to be offered to him. So he made a clean breast of the facts this time, but for Pope Leo's ear solely, disclosely definitely that he was the son of a priest. So fearful was he that the humiliating facts connected with his birth might become subject for common gossip amongst the underlings of the Roman Curia, that he wrote them down

[26] Pithou, *Decretalia Gregorii IX*, Vol. II, p. 36.
[27] *Ibid.*, p. 40.
[28] *Ibid.*, p. 41.
[29] "Si auorum traditioni in istis partibus fides habenda, parente vicinae ciuitatis Goudanae parocho natus est, praegnantem famulam quo crimen celaretur . . . in proximam ciuitatem ablegante," etc. (Quoted by Allen, *Eras. Ep.*, Vol. I, p. 47, note.)

in a cypher, the secret of transliterating which he entrusted only to that one person whom he called Grunnius, but whom we surmise to have been his reliable and trustworthy friend Sadoleti; and, to prevent anyone from copying it undetected, wrote the cyphered section in invisible ink.

We note another fact in connection with his petition to Pope Leo. He knew that he had no claim to any name but that of his mother, and accordingly signed himself Erasmus Rogerii of Rotterdam, Rogerius presumably being his mother's family name. His brother Peter never made any request for a dispensation, and continued to bear his father's name of Gerard. There is a similarity of name between Erasmus and Servatius which furnishes food for speculation. Servatius Rogerus was also of Rotterdam, and may have been a relative. When Erasmus' mother was near the time of her delivery, it is to be assumed that she had not left her native town and betaken herself to Rotterdam without knowing beforehand to whose care she was going. What more likely than that she would seek the home of some relative of the family then resident in Rotterdam? Then, too, we have no evidence that Servatius and Erasmus had met for the first time in Steyn; and it is within the range of possibility that Erasmus' position as a member of that community may have been the determining factor of Servatius' choice of a monastery in which to make his profession; for it is strange that he should turn his back on Rotterdam, where there were so many well-known and well-endowed monasteries, to cast in his lot with that of Steyn which was neither rich nor celebrated.

So, too, if we accept that part of Erasmus' statement to Pope Julius wherein he represents his mother as a widow, this opens up the rather interesting question as to whether Peter was his whole brother or only his half brother, his mother having borne him in her former marriage. This would in some measure explain the singular lack of affection which Erasmus seems to have entertained towards Peter. That the father made no distinction between the two boys in his will, assuming that Peter was only a stepson, might be easily explained by his affection for their mother. As the point seems to be beyond all chance of elucidation at this late day, it is useless to dwell upon it.

The second difference between the Julian dispensation and that of Leo X is that the former makes no mention of his laying aside the habit of his Order. As a matter of fact, he did not begin to lay aside his habit until after the receipt of the dispensation, and consequently that instrument could not very well condone an offense which had not then been committed. That he wore his habit during his entire Italian visit may also be inferred from the fact that the high officials of his Order then resident in Rome would never have permitted such a notable breach of the Augustinian rule. So, too, the fact that none of his Italian enemies who had known him during his sojourn in Italy had ever upbraided him for laying aside his habit, although they had not hesitated to accuse him of drunkenness at Venice, would seem to prove that he had not furnished them with such a weapon of offense as the abandonment of his habit would surely have offered. Hence we must conclude

that it was in England where he later decided to throw off the habit; and that the circumstances of the case as he states them in the Grunnius letter, including particularly the Bologna incident, are not absolutely according to the truth. But he soon found that in throwing off the detested habit he had seriously compromised himself; and while he was permitted, in view of his literary productions which even Steyn appreciated, to go on his way unmolested, he found that it was far different when he had aroused fierce enmities for himself by his *Praise of Folly* and his slighting remarks on monks and theologians. The charge of apostasy was cast in his teeth by Lee and others; and he began to realize his poor generalship in having thus exposed his flank to the enemy. There are three sorts of apostasy comprehended in that term, the abandonment of the clerical tonsure, the abandonment of the habit of one's Order, and the abandonment of the Christian religion. Erasmus had certainly been guilty of the two former kinds, and recognized the ecclesiastical penalties he had incurred as a consequence. Hence we find this dereliction of his presented to Pope Leo for absolution, and his abhorrence of the habit carefully concealed by the pretext that to change back from his present dress to the monk's habit again might cause scandal to the weak-minded. Though specious, this was really a weighty argument in view of his growing fame; and we feel that the Pope exercised good judgment in granting him permission to lay aside the habit in consideration of wearing a clerical dress such as was worn at that time by the secular clergy, with the further proviso that underneath it he should wear something emblematic of the fact that he was still a member of the Augustinian Canons. The Pope did not dissolve Erasmus' allegiance to his Order, but he dispensed him from wearing the outward badge of his service, and with this he had perforce to be content. If our reasoning as to the time and place of Erasmus' laying aside the habit of his Order is correct, then his statement to Servatius in 1514 that Pope Julius had given him permission to lay it aside or wear it just as he wished, provided that he wore an ecclesiastical dress, is not true. The brief of Pope Julius which we have just given makes not the slightest reference to the matter of dress, and there is only the remotest possibility that there was a subsequent brief issued covering that point. Even Beatus Rhenanus expresses his doubts on the matter, saying plainly that he suspected Erasmus to have had no permission from Pope Julius to make a change in his dress, or Pope Leo in the later dispensation would have made mention of it.[80]

[80] "Suspicor Erasmum nihil habuisse a Iulio II; alioqui Leo eius rei meminisset." (See Horawitz and Hartfelder, *Briefwechsel des Beatus Rhenanus*, p. 338. Leipzig, 1886.)

CHAPTER V

CORRESPONDENCE AND PLANS

We have now come to the eventful year 1517, made memorable, not by Erasmus and his petty troubles about his habit, which were so important in his eyes that he had to set all the machinery of the Roman Curia in motion in order to lay it aside, but by Martin Luther, who in this year first challenged the methods that the same Roman Curia from time immemorial had been wont to pursue. And this is the first glaring difference between these two Catholic monks, that Erasmus had always been an egoist, while Luther had been always altruistic up to the present moment. Whether or not Luther always remained so need not concern us here; but it is of importance to observe whether the lamentable religious strife which was so soon to follow would have any modifying effect on Erasmus' all-absorbing ego.

Meanwhile, since Luther does not appear on the scene until late in this year, we shall take the occasion to see what Erasmus was doing, and with whom he was corresponding. We have a long letter from William Budé, and incidentally we may say that all his letters were lengthy, being interspersed with much Greek, of which language he was possibly the greatest master at that period. This letter is of interest to us here on account of its little personal touches about several great men. Budé says that he was browsing in the old bookshops of Paris one day when he met William Petit, who, though he was a simple Dominican monk, was a distinguished theologian, the king's confessor, and the court preacher. Budé always held him in high regard, and had only one fault to find with him, which he laughingly relates to Erasmus, namely, that Petit held in too high an estimation a stranger like Erasmus, whose glory makes him [Budé] jealous, because it illumines not only Germany and the other parts of Europe, but even France, to the extent that it throws his renown and that of other men into the shade. He proceeds to say that one day at the court of Francis I the conversation turned on learned men and, when incidentally the name of Erasmus was mentioned, the king requested Petit to invite Erasmus to take up his abode in France, promising in that event to grant the man of letters a canonry with a pension of a thousand francs. Budé goes on to tell how his praises have been sung to the king by such great scholars as Stephen Poncher, Bishop of Paris, William Cop, the king's physician; and to these we may add Francis de Rupefort, the king's preceptor, Francis de Leyn, president of the Parliament, Germain deBrie, canon of the Cathedral of Notre Dame, and many other of Erasmus' friends at the French court who certainly would not have remained mute while his praises were being sung by the rest. His reply to Budé was characteristic of

him, and brings forcibly to mind part of his advice to Ammonius which we have quoted heretofore:

> Ride two horses at once. Employ several people to solicit the privilege of extending favors to you. Threaten to leave, and prepare for departure. Exhibit letters wherein you are invited to go away somewhere for flattering considerations, and take yourself off occasionally, so that in your absence they will miss you.[1]

Acting accordingly, he tells Budé how he is torn between his desires and his obligations, and that nothing on earth would suit him better than to go to France, for which he had always a great affection. He even adds that, if the cosmographers are to be trusted, Holland is really a part of France. However, though he confessed his great appreciation of the kindness and courtesy implied in the king's offer, and his obligations to all his Parisian friends for their good opinion of him, yet he could not make any definite response until he had ascertained the feelings of the Chancellor, who had caused him to be named a Councilor of the Empire, and who was then at Cambrai. Meanwhile he would reflect on the offer seriously, as well as take counsel with his friends in the matter; and as soon as the Chancellor had returned, and he had consulted with him, he would send them his answer. Thus he left the matter open, although we are inclined to agree with Feugère that he never had any real intention of going to France.[2] To King Francis himself he sent a letter extolling that monarch's greatness, and depreciating his own abilities, the terms in which it was couched being such as were well calculated to allay any suspicion in the king's mind that his offer was rejected. Erasmus had just written to Anthony Clava, one of the members of the Imperial Council, that up to the present he had been sowing his crops, not knowing what he was going to reap. After this offer of the French monarch he writes Clava that he is no longer anxious about his crops, provided that the cost of harvesting them does not exceed the return from them.[3] To Stephen Poncher, the Bishop of Paris, he also wrote, thanking him for his kind thought in the matter, and incidentally recommending to his notice as a coming man of letters Henry Glareanus. He gives the Bishop a striking description of Glareanus' personality, of which we shall avail ourselves later.[4] Although this opening for his declining years of an assured and honorable position and a maintenance in France did not materialize in the event, yet we are thankful that it was the occasion of a lengthy and friendly correspondence between Budé and Erasmus, which is delightful for its tone of learned badinage, and in which each vied with the other in classical allusion while still maintaining the natural ease of friendly interchange of ideas.

In 1514, as the reader may see by reference to a former page, Eras-

[1] Eras. Ep. 250.

[2] "dans les réponses que fait Érasme aux offres de François Ier, il y a quelque intérêt à relever cet art de refuser sans dire non, cette adresse à entretenir chez ses puissants patrons des espérances qu'il n'a pas dessein de satisfaire." (*Étude sur Érasme*, p. 65. Paris, 1874.)

[3] Eras. Ep. 530.

[4] *Ibid.*, 529.

mus had made the acquaintance of Louis Canossa, the Pope's legate to Henry VIII for the purpose of securing that monarch's consent to a peace with Louis XII of France.[5] In spite of the nature of the meeting, which had ended in a slight loss of Erasmus' dignity, Canossa had conceived the highest regard for his literary abilities. Now he had just been appointed to the episcopal See of Bayeux, and one of his first acts was to invite Erasmus to come and reside with him in literary leisure, offering an annual pension of two hundred ducats, with maintenance for himself, his servant, and two horses. Having, however, just refused the more munificent offer of the French king, Erasmus could hardly accept that of a French bishop: so, using the same excuse of the absence of the Chancellor of Burgundy, he left the matter contingent for the present. Writing to Germain deBrie in 1532, however, Erasmus shows himself little grateful to the prelate for his former kindness, telling deBrie that "If now Canossa is badly disposed towards Erasmus, it is nothing remarkable, since slighted affection is wont to turn to hatred." [6]

But we have the real reason for his continued refusal of such flattering offers as these mentioned in the fact that he had accepted the bounty of the Chancellor of Burgundy on the expressed stipulation that he should stay at home and adorn their common country. That is why he wrote to Ammonius at this time, "France offers me mountains of gold, but my hands are tied."[7]

Meanwhile he kept his eyes on his English friends, and sent copies of the letters which he received from Budé to delight More with their witty and classical contents. We must here give a letter of Erasmus to More which he sent about this time, and which is of interest to us because in it he mentions for the first time the celebrated dialogue of *Iulius exclusus,* and besides this is eager to know how he stands at present with Archbishop Warham, Colet, and Fisher:

> I recently sent you a bundle of letters together with a copy of the *Utopia,* by a person who said that he was a great friend of yours; and I would have loaded him down with more, but was afraid to do so. Now that I have got hold of another courier, I am sending you everything pertaining to Reuchlin contained in one pamphlet, which you will get to the Bishop of Rochester so that he may read it and return it to me as soon as possible; for there are some of these which you will never see anywhere else. Read the propositions distinctly theological, the unfathomable opinions, and the topics of Arnold of Tongres. I am sending a letter to Marlianus, because he suspected the first book of the *Utopia* to have emanated from me, and I was unwilling to let this report gain ground since there is no idea more silly. The dialogue of Julius and Peter, as I hear, is already in the hands of the great Chancellor, and pleases him extremely. I am awaiting the *Praise of Folly* every day.[8] Send me your *Utopia* as soon as possible when revised, and I will dispatch a copy to Basle, or, if you prefer, to Paris. If Ammonius has anything in hand for me, see that it be forwarded as quickly

[5] See pp. 357 *sqq.* in Volume One.
[6] Eras. Ep. (LB) col. 1459E.
[7] Eras. Ep. 539.
[8] It is uncertain which edition he meant.

as may be, for the Prince is preparing for his departure, and I am in doubt whither or when I shall have to set out. A huge tax is demanded from the people, and that at once. The request has been accepted by the nobles and prelates, people who will never give anything. Now the communes are in consultation. The Prince, generally unarmed, is now present with a magnificently equipped army; and the fields are everywhere filled with bands of soldiers, but whence or for what purpose they come is uncertain. Oh, wretched country, gnawed by so many vultures! Oh, most happy, if peace existed between these states!

Let me know if Warham and Colet are still in the same mind towards me; and also Fisher, about whom I wrote you recently. The father of the young man who delivers you this letter has entertained me at a most sumptuous dinner. He is a wealthy and estimable man, and has spoken much of your kindness to him. Help me, I beg of you, with your counsel. I shall presently take measures for the printing of another small volume of epistles, whereby more may read them. I send you Budé's last effusion. I pray Maruffo may meet his deserts, and with him his bill of exchange, for those Sauls[9] cannot be realized on without my going to Bruges. Farewell, my dearest More. Antwerp, March 1, 1517.

Francis is still over there. If he has not yet delivered to the Archbishop of Canterbury the rest of the *Jerome,* it must be demanded of him, for he is bound to this. Send back a copy of the letters which I am now sending you, along with the papers that Lupset returned to you; but be sure your courier is trusty. Again farewell, you and all your household.[10]

This is the first mention of the famous dialogue of *Pope Julius Excluded from Heaven* made by Erasmus in his correspondence that has come down to us. He speaks of it here to More as of a thing with which both are thoroughly acquainted; and considering that it had probably not yet been printed, but was only being circulated in manuscript, it is the first, if not the most convincing argument that he was the author of it. Then he informs us that it was in the hands of his patron the Chancellor of Burgundy, who, he heard, was enjoying it immensely. From the tone of this remark it is allowable to infer that it pleased Erasmus immensely also; and who would be more likely to send it to his patron than Erasmus himself? As all authorities are now agreed on his authorship of the work, we need not tarry here to substantiate their conclusions. He never told More, or Colet, or Ammonius, or Lupset, or any of his more intimate English friends that he was not the author of the pamphlet, so we may infer that they knew better, and thus by their knowledge were in a measure *participes criminis.* But, when some bookseller at Cologne got hold of a copy and published it, Erasmus took fright, and the only bit of reassurance

[9] I suppose this word "Saulos" to mean notes of hand, and that the name had some reference to the Jews, who then as now were prominent in money-changing circles.

[10] Eras. Ep. 543.

he had in the matter was that it had been printed anonymously. Yet immediately the finger of the whole world pointed at him as the author, so like his was its style and its sentiments; and he was kept busy denying it for a considerable length of time. So much had Pope Julius, his nephews, and the Cardinals of his court done for Erasmus personally that he really felt ashamed to appear as the author of such an ungrateful lampoon, and sought by every means in his power to keep his authorship secret. He hastened to write to Wolsey and Campegio protesting his innocence in the matter; but we feel that he protested too much.

This is how he presented the matter to Campegio:

> They are endeavoring to throw on me the suspicion of having written a certain pamphlet. This piece, as is evident from the argument, was written at the time of the schism to cast odium on his Holiness Julius II; but who the author was is uncertain. Five years ago I gave it a glance rather than read it. Afterwards I found it current in Germany, but under differing titles. Some declared it to be the work of a certain Spaniard, but with his name suppressed; others attributed it to the poet Fausto [Andrelini], and still others to Jerome Balbo. I myself have nothing on which to base a conjecture. I scented round as much as I could; but I have not yet traced anything up to satisfy my mind. Whoever wrote it went too far; but whoever published it is worthy of a still severer punishment. But I am surprised that there are some who attribute it to me by reason only of its style, though it is not my style of expression, unless I am completely unacquainted with myself; nor will it be wondered at that there may be something in this dialogue reminding one of Erasmus, since I am in the hands of everybody, and we are commonly reminded of the sayings of those whom we are constantly reading. Nor are there lacking here those who boast that your Eminence has been almost led to harbor the same suspicion of me, a thing which I shall never believe unless I can be persuaded that the things said about your Eminence's admirable learning and prudence by the greatest men everywhere lack foundation. I doubt not that, if the opportunity were given me to speak with you personally, which may happen, I hope, through Christ's mercy, I could eradicate this suspicion from your mind, if so be that you had entertained it. Meanwhile, I beseech you of your kindness to believe that Erasmus would have suppressed books of this sort if written and published by others, so far is it from him to have either published, or to have ever intended to publish, such a pamphlet as this.[11]

To Wolsey he spoke of the many young German writers who were springing up to defend literature and learning, and he seems to hint that Wolsey should rather look for the author of the *Iulius exclusus* in their ranks, since they fight with all sorts of weapons. Eobanus, Hutten, and Beatus Rhenanus are the only ones whose acquaintance

[11] *Ibid.*, 961, ll. 35-58.

he admits, and he says, "I have warned them all to check their unrestrained liberty, and especially to refrain from attacking the dignitaries of the Church, lest they should prejudice against learning the minds of those under whose patronage they are enabled to stand up against their enemies, and thus brand these defenders of polite literature with a mark of reproach."[12] What effect this had on Wolsey we know not, but it is well calculated to make most men smile when they hear the author of the *Praise of Folly* exhorting these young German writers to spare the dignitaries of the Church.

The *Iulius exclusus* is considered to be one of the results of the Italian journey, and to have been written after the *Praise of Folly.* After having studied many hundreds of Erasmus' letters and noted therein his characteristic turns and phrases, we can easily see who wrote the *Praise of Folly* and the *Colloquies.* Recognizing in the *Iulius exclusus* the same Terentian mannerisms, the same identical peculiarities of style and diction that are so evident in these two acknowledged works, we are thoroughly convinced that Erasmus wrote it. If Hutten or Andrelini or Glareanus had written it, as he suggests, they would have gloried in the fact. And he never denied flatly its authorship, for the reason, we suppose, that the fact was known to too many of his closest friends for any such denial; but he was lavish in all sorts of equivocations whereby to throw suspicion off the scent. Doctor Allen, in his admirable Latin edition of the letters, has summed up all the data on the subject very succinctly. He says, "Even his elaborate repudiations to Campegio . . . and Wolsey . . . do not exceed his powers of equivocation, and, as Jortin points out . . ., the only thing that he there specifically denies is the publication; as to which he is strictly correct, considering the custom of the time.[13]

The dialogue itself is admirably written: full of humorous interrogation and witty retort; the characters are well sustained, and the interest never flags. St. Peter is represented as full of contempt for Pope Julius, and this bellicose successor of his is arraigned before him and invited to give his reasons why he should be admitted to Heaven: every reason that he alleges in favor of his admission St. Peter turns very deftly into a reason why he should be rejected. The third character of the composition is called the Genius of Julius, whose function seems to be to explain the more or less obvious allusions. These three characters give us somewhat of an Aristophanic comedy, St. Peter and Pope Julius being the principals, with the Genius acting the part of the Chorus. Like the *Praise of Folly,* the piece caused him infinite trouble and enmity, and on account of its anonymity added nothing to his reputation. It was first published in the early part of 1517, of which we are now treating. Had he been able to disregard his acutely sensitive feelings in the matter of abusing his beloved Latin, he might have written the *Iulius exclusus* in the same kind of dog Latin that the authors of the *Epistolae obscurorum virorum* used in that composition, and have never been suspected.

[12] *Ibid.*, 967.
[13] *Ibid.*, 502, Introduction. (See Jortin, *Erasmus,* Vol. II, p. 596n.)

But retribution was at hand for the bad example he had set in writing the *Praise of Folly;* for when the *Nemo* of Hutten, the *Febris* of Faber Stapulensis, and several other more or less scurrilous pamphlets appeared, among which was the above-mentioned *Epistolae obscurorum virorum,* which exceeded them in all scurrility, Erasmus was at once set down as the author of every one of them. It was in vain that with almost hysterical fervor he declared his innocence: nobody believed him, and he was execrated for lampoons not his own, but which his own writings had too surely emboldened others to send forth. But as an example of how he had to suffer for his own misdeeds, we may give a few paragraphs of a letter to Thomas More written about this period:

> I have just learned who it was in the court circle that raised such a commotion against me. There is a certain doctor of divinity with a degree from Paris, who has been a Carmelite, but in hopes of an abbacy has become a Benedictine, a man more than any I know of addicted to evil speaking, who soon afterwards was made a suffragan, that is a factitious, bishop of Cambrai. He has been barking loudly against me, not in court circles alone, for there is no social gathering at which he does not inveigh against Erasmus, and holds my *Praise of Folly* in especial dislike, being a pious man, forsooth, who cannot abide any attack on St. Christopher or St. George. And yet this fellow exerts great influence over Chièvres, who is at the head of everything,[14] and perhaps over the King, since he has lately been appointed his confessor in place of Josse Clicthove, who had been recently named to that position but was afterwards rejected on no other grounds than that he was too thin in flesh, and had not ten hairs on his head. Halluin has increased the hostility against me by his French translation of my *Praise of Folly,* which is now understood by the theologians, provided that they happen to know French. . . . I have not yet decided where to live. Spain, to which I have again been invited by the Cardinal of Toledo, suits me not. The German hot-rooms, and the German roads overrun by thieves, are not a pleasant prospect. Here [Louvain] there is too much snarling, and nothing to be gained; and I could not tarry long here even if I so desired. I am afraid of the troubles that may arise in England; and I abhor servitude. If you yourself have any advice to give me, let me have it please, for I have not the slightest hope of so arranging matters with my own monastic brethren that I could overcome the hatred of monks and theologians. The rascals are working daily to form a party, and only need a leader. It is fortunate for me that the suffragan [bishop] is going to Spain, for he will surely die there, since he is over seventy. Nevertheless, there are some Dominicans and Carmelites who are beginning to egg on the people to throw stones, a pestilential pastime that is nowhere so common as among my own countrymen. Louvain ⟨July⟩, 1517.[15]

[14] Chièvres was William of Croy, governor of the young Prince Charles.
[15] Eras. Ep. 597.

Louvain was the only university for Holland and Brabant, and hence Louvain was the centre for Dutch scholars and the natural home for such a man as Erasmus. But, as we have seen, he had made the place almost untenable as a home for him by his intemperate and ill-timed attacks on the conventions of the Catholic Church, which time had made sacred in the eyes of the multitude. It was in vain for him to say that he attacked things and not individuals, that there was nothing personal in his satiric thrusts, and that hence his rancorous gibes and disparagements should be overlooked. It was too much to expect from poor human nature that he should be allowed to abuse the monks and divines with impunity, and that they should not strike back when they were jeered at and insulted by him. He wore no halo in their eyes, nor did they conceive him to be a second Heaven-sent Elijah to rebuke them. On the contrary, seeing him to be a man totally devoid of all claims to sanctity, a man full of the infirmities of humanity, a man whose personal motives were not above suspicion, they furiously resented his assumption of the rod of correction, and marveled at his assurance. They admitted the superiority of his attainments, but would not submit to his impertinences. The sort of thing which used to anger them is well exemplified in the above letter to More, where he speaks of Halluin having translated the *Praise of Folly* into French, and that now the theologians would be able to understand the work. But this was too mild for him, and hence we see him adding the totally unjustifiable slur, "providing that they happen to know French." If the indignation of the French theologians boiled over at this insult, they may be easily pardoned. It unnecessarily hurt the feelings of a class of divines who, as having been educated in the University of Paris, were the peers of anyone in theology and canon law. True, some of them may have been dilettantes, and even triflers; but for Erasmus to write them down ignorant as a class was to stultify himself, for he had spent some of the best years of his youth among this very sort of men, and from them were drawn not only his best friends, but also a few of his most formidable and able enemies. His unfortunate tongue was his own worst enemy, for it alienated those who were otherwise well disposed towards him. We may guess the intensity of the feeling of hostility now being manifested against him by both learned and unlearned at Louvain by his remark to More just quoted, that the divines snarled at him, while the multitude were beginning to throw stones. His case was pitiful, indeed, the infirmities of his temper being aggravated by his chronic physical infirmities, of which the most exhausting and destructive to his nervous poise was the gravel. He had made a reputation for witty repartee and humorous anecdote, and the effort to live up to his fame in this regard, together with his work, so sapped his vitality that at fifty-one he felt old and worn-out. We who are aware of these things can make due allowance for his bitterness; but at the same time we cannot blame the victims of his irritable tongue for resenting it, since they were not aware of the physical disadvantages under which he suffered. To most men at fifty-one the storm and stress of life are over, and they naturally hope for a few quiet years before death overtakes them; but to Erasmus,

whose life hitherto had been one long struggle against adverse forces, some subjective and some objective, it was the direst calamity that the troubles he had previously overcome were as nothing compared with what were to follow after Luther had appeared on the scene. But this was still some months distant. Meanwhile he had decided for the present to remain at the University of Louvain, although he had just told More that the divines there were snarling at him. Perhaps we should attribute this to his suspicious nature which saw hostility where none existed; for, in a letter to Tunstall, shortly after this time, he tells him: "I find the divines of Louvain generous and kind, especially Doctor John Briard, the Chancellor of the University, a man of incomparable learning and the rarest refinement. Here there is no less theological erudition than at Paris; but less sophistry, less arrogance." [16] And again in a letter to Peter Gilles about the same time he writes: "The theologians are bringing something about by which they may make me of their Faculty; but what this is, I know not. Briard is entirely my friend, and so is Dorp, although he is more inconstant than any woman." [17]

Erasmus had moods, and what was right to-day might be wrong to-morrow. As he advanced in reputation he became more resentful of criticism; and those of his acquaintance who did not entirely agree with him, and dared to say so, like Dorp, for instance, were regarded with distrust. He considered that he was the leader of a party which included all the more independent thinkers of the day. Embraced in this party were the scholars at Basle, such as Rhenanus, Ber, and Nesen, to whom may be added such men as Pirckheimer, Zasius, and Glareanus. Then at Paris were Budé, Deloin, and Petit. All these men were advanced thinkers and, as such, a little ahead of their times. Such men have been misunderstood in all ages of the world's history, and were angry with the world that it would not readily listen to them. All reformers have been too impatient of immediate results, except Our Savior the Great Reformer. The lesson of His infinite patience is lost on them, and they see not the whole meaning of His prayer on the cross for pardon and forgiveness for enemies. So we detect a touch of arrogance in Erasmus' vouching for Budé to Nesen when he says: "He is my friend, he is learned, he is of my party, and is sufficiently vouched for by me." [18]

And now we have to chronicle the death by the plague of one of his best friends, Andreas Ammonius. We have already [19] given some account of this scholarly man's life, and need only remind the reader that it was through his connection with his fellow-countryman the Bishop of Worcester, King Henry's representative at the pontifical court, and his own intimate knowledge of the details necessary to accomplish anything at that court, that he finally secured for Erasmus his dispensation from the hands of Pope Leo X. Erasmus heard the sad news of Ammonius' untimely death by means of a letter sent to him by his compatriot John Sixtin from London:

Although I know that it is sad news that I am about to announce

[16] *Ibid.*, 675.
[17] *Ibid.*, 637.
[18] *Ibid.*, 630.
[19] See page 222 of Volume One.

to you, yet I felt that I should write you of it because you ought to know it. To-day our friend Andreas Ammonius was buried, taken off by the sweating sickness, by which many men of note have perished. May God be kind and good to his soul! On the very day on which he passed away, we were to spend a few days together in the country, for thus we had agreed, having been sent horses for that purpose by the prior of Merton Abbey; but now he is, as I devoutly hope, in Heaven, and has left me here to follow him when it shall please God.[20]

Thomas More also informed him of it in a letter written on the same day as Sixtin's, in which he laments the death of so many of his noble and influential friends; and says that among these was "our friend Ammonius, in whose death learning and all good men have met a severe loss."

There is no doubt that Erasmus was sincerely sorry for the loss of his friend; but from the short note of condolence which he sent to Peter, the cousin of Ammonius, we can see that the effect of it on his own affairs was by no means lost sight of:

I feel the death of our Ammonius so acutely that nothing could touch me more deeply. For what a wealth of goodness perished with him! I cannot recall him to life; but certainly I shall not permit the memory of the man to die, if my writings can avail anything to that end. I beseech you to gather up all his letters to me and mine to him in one bundle, and see that they are sent to me here by a safe messenger. Likewise, if there are any memoranda about the affair which he arranged for me with the Pope, let them be either destroyed or sent hither. Farewell, dearest Peter, and regard Erasmus as entirely yours.[21]

We gather from this how careful he was of his letters, and how he always wanted to feel secure that they would never return to plague him. Ammonius, like Batt, died before Erasmus was able to help him by the exertion of his increasing influence; but the English friends of Ammonius had been very good to him. He had a mind steeped in every sort of classical learning, and with high literary aspirations, so it is not to be wondered at that Erasmus had a great admiration for him and regarded him as his peer. But the greatest wonder is how Erasmus could fascinate the minds of such men as Ammonius, Batt, Beatus Rhenanus, Lupset, Nesen, and a hundred others to the point that they would lay aside, and sometimes sacrifice, their own time and money to advance his interests. He must have had a remarkable power of impressing men with his superiority of talent and attainments, in addition to an attractive and winning manner.

While he had been staying as a guest with Peter Gilles at Antwerp during this period, the two friends had sat for their portraits, and on the completion of the work Erasmus had dispatched his to More, who was then at Calais in his capacity of envoy from King Henry. The

[20] *Ibid.*, 624. [21] *Ibid.*, 656.

painter was the celebrated Quentin Matsys, and the work, which still exists, was admirably executed. Of course More was delighted and hastened to say so. He interpreted the gift to be a desire on the part of Erasmus to be in More's memory as often as his loyal English friend gazed on the portrait. He acknowledged that there lingered in him a slight itch for the glory which was to come to him when posterity was made aware of the friendship which existed between him and Erasmus, but expressed regret that his mediocrity was such when compared with the genius of his great friend. There was no hypocrisy about Sir Thomas More, as witness his admission that he was eager for the fame that would come to him by reason of his association with Erasmus; and his unconsciousness that in his *Utopia,* which he had just given to the world, there was anything remarkable, shows us the innate modesty of the man. To Gilles he sent some verses in which he makes the picture speak, and he himself praises the work of the artist and indicates to the passer-by how he may recognize the portraits.

Another friend of Erasmus died this year, Jerome Busleiden, a learned and wealthy Hollander who had acquired many ecclesiastical benefices as a reward for his diplomatic services to his sovereigns. He was a graduate of Bologna, but his earlier education had been gained at Louvain, Orléans, and at Padua. He had met More, Tunstall, and many other friends of Erasmus while on a mission to England on behalf of his sovereign to congratulate Henry VIII on his accession to the throne. His Italian sojourn also had gained him the acquaintance of others with whom Erasmus had foregathered; and it was due to these mutual friendships that Busleiden and Erasmus had been drawn each to the other. Like Colocci at Rome, Busleiden had built at Mechlin a magnificent home for himself, where he lavishly entertained all the men of learning who passed that way. Since he had preceded Erasmus at Bologna in point of time, we may infer that he had smoothed the path of his fellow-countryman in that city by suitable letters of introduction; and it was from Bologna that Erasmus dedicated to this wealthy patron some of his translations of the dialogues of Lucian back in 1506. Busleiden had been selected by Prince Charles as one of the nobles who were to accompany him to Spain, but he died on the journey at Bordeaux. He left his wealth to found a college at Louvain for the teaching of Latin, Greek, and Hebrew, and to Erasmus was entrusted the task of finding a suitable teacher of Hebrew for the new college.[22] The man finally selected on his recommendation was a converted Hebrew physician named Matthew Adrian, whose attainments Erasmus praised very highly. The choice of a Greek teacher was also largely left to him, as we learn from his letter to John Lascaris, head of the Greek college in Rome, who was at that time a visitor to the French court, and whose help Erasmus requested in finding the best possible Greek available for the position, telling him that the salary would be seventy ducats, which might be increased if the one filling the chair were a man of great reputation;

[22] For extracts from his will touching on this matter, see F. Nève, *La Renaissance des Lettres en Belgique; Mémoire sur le Collége des Trois-Langues à Louvain, in loco.*

and that, in addition to this, his traveling expenses and a free home would be supplied.[23] Rutger Rescius was finally chosen for the position, and, with Goclen as head of the Latin department, the new college was launched. As this Goclen was to be in the future one of the very few men who possessed the confidence and secrets of Erasmus, we will here transcribe what he says of him to More:

> I am about to give you a friend whom you can take to your heart cordially and completely. This is Conrad Goclen, a Westphalian by birth. Although that people are held to be somewhat unlettered, yet they have given us many men of the highest genius, and endowed with much uncommon learning. There is no other race more patient in toil, or who are to be more commended for the sincerity of their faith and morals, and for their simple prudence, or rather, for their prudent simplicity. You know that we have recently instituted a College of the Three Languages at Louvain. There he lectures publicly on Latin literature with the greatest success, and to the utmost profit of the whole University; and such is his graciousness of manner that he makes his lectures pleasing even to those who were hitherto averse to that study. Even in the sciences which are formally treated in the public disputations, his skill shows forth the quickness of his genius. Wit he has too, but quite Attic; and might vie even with you in story-telling. In poetry he has a special charm, never appearing obscure, harsh, or unpleasing. Nor is there any subject so repellent that it does not yield to his gentle treatment. In prose he is so like, or rather, unlike, himself that, reading his works, you would deem him far removed from a poet.
>
> He seems surely made for friendship, so that if you once meet him, you need never fear that anything will mar the friendship, as frequently happens with those who are by nature treacherous or of weak affections. For such people are wont to fall away when occasion calls, and, neglecting the laws of friendship, yield to their feelings. . . . Now, if our leaders, both lay and clerical, had learned to bestow merited honors on remarkable geniuses, as they do in Italy, our Goclen would be all gold.[24]

We shall have occasion to speak of Goclen frequently towards the end of our work, so we will defer further comment. Erasmus was deeply interested in seeing that the new college should succeed, and scarcely a single letter of his went forth now without announcing the advent of the College of the Three Languages. As there was some delay in the selection of the professors, Erasmus never ceased to urge on Gilles Busleiden, the brother of the dead benefactor, the necessity of choosing the right men for the places. "Rutger [Rescius] is here," he writes to Gilles, "a most worthy young man, and more learned than he appears; but, as I have said, I prefer to have the affair started with men who are celebrated and eminent."[25]

[23] Eras. Ep. 836. [24] *Ibid.*, 1220. [25] *Ibid.*, 691.

We come now to a very important letter which definitely tells us why Erasmus chose to abandon his former plan of settling down in England, and why he did not care to accompany his hereditary sovereign Prince Charles to Spain. It also contains his opinions on the controversy between Reuchlin and Hoogstraaten, his inborn hatred of Jews generally, his feeling that religious differences of all kinds are harmful to real religion, and his conviction that the Emperor and the bishops should take measures to ward off the dangers that are surely impending:

To Willibald Pirckheimer,
Most illustrious Sir.

I received your pamphlet along with your letter, to which I will respond briefly, since, overwhelmed with the greatest labors, I live as I can at Louvain, having been aggregated to the Faculty, although I did not obtain my title of Doctor in this University. I prefer things as they are here rather than to accompany Prince Charles to Spain, especially since I see the court cut up into factions of Spaniards, followers of Maranus, adherents of Chièvres, the French, the Imperialists, the Neapolitans, the Sicilians, and what not. Last spring, when I went to England on private business, the king of his own motion received me with wonderful kindness, as did also the Cardinal, the other king, if I may say so. They offered me, besides a magnificent residence, six hundred gold florins every year. I so thanked them that I neither accepted nor rejected the conditions offered. Here [Louvain] I live at my own great cost, yet it is settled that I shall stay here some months, partly to finish up what I have in hand, and partly to await the result of my great expectations from the Chancellor of Burgundy, a man most learned and the patron of all literary men, now acting for the absent prince. My *New Testament,* which was rushed through rather than edited at Basle some time ago, I am now revising and reprinting; and I am so reprinting it that it will be a different work. It will be finished, I hope, within four months.

Your pamphlet, that affectionate *Defence of Reuchlin,* in which you seem more than usually eloquent, pleased me very much. I believe, as Fabius said, that not alone your genius and your learning, but also your heart, rendered you eloquent. But I think nothing more calamitous than to fight in any way, shape, or manner; and especially calamitous when it is with a sordid and infamous enemy. For with what sort of enemies does Reuchlin contend? With a lot of hornets whom even the Roman Pontiff fears to provoke; so much so that Alexander was wont to declare himself safer in offending any of the greatest kings than a single one of these mendicants who, under the pretext of a lowly name, exercise a real tyranny over the Christian world, although I do not consider it just to impute to the entire body of monks what is committed by the viciousness of a few.

Then observe, I pray you, what sort of a medium these anything

but real professors of the true religion make use of: a man completely unlearned, of bold front, whose boldness nothing can disturb, to whom you would not have applied the term of a half Jew had he not by his deeds shown himself to be a Jew one and a half times over. What other instrument would the Devil, that eternal enemy of the Christian religion, rather have wished for than this angel of Satan transformed into an angel of light; under this most false pretext of defending religion, everywhere disturbing that which is the highest and best thing in it, namely, public concord throughout the Christian world? What more unbecoming than to see men worthy of immortal fame fighting with such a monster, with whose very name I am unwilling to pollute my paper? May I perish if he did not have himself baptized for no other reason than that he might thus inflict the greater destruction on Christians and, being one of us, could thus infect the entire people with his Jewish poison. How could he have hurt us had he remained a Jew? But now he truly acts the part of a Jew, since he has assumed the rôle of a Christian, and yet acts according to his race. . . .

What will happen if this informer is thus permitted to rage against his betters in this way, and learned men are compelled to reply in their writings to this dirty beast, who is not fit to be named amongst men? Believe me, my learned Willibald, these beginnings have wider effects than most people imagine. We often see from what a little spark a great fire arises. Hence I am surprised that the bishops are not watchful so that they might burn up this hydra in time, and fall upon him while he is spreading the poison victoriously everywhere. . . . This scourge argues with himself thus. "Even if I am ill spoken of by a few good and learned men, it satisfies me if I please the greater part of mankind. Even if I become execrated by the Christians when my tricks and artifices are detected and made known, I will still reap a most certain glory with my own Jewish people, who will then realize that it was in no hostile mood that I fell away from them." Thus the erudite are attacking this fellow not only to their own disgrace, but in vain, since, except infamy, there is nothing to be gained whether they win or lose. The public hangman could better control this pest. It is the duty of the bishops, the duty of our most just Emperor Maximilian, the duty of the magistrates of the renowned city of Cologne, not to cherish such a virulent viper for the certain destruction of the Christian religion, unless there is prepared an antidote equal to such an evil. And these things I have said from no private grudge, for he has never hurt me an iota; or, if he has prated about me, I do not care, and the affair does not relate to me in the least; but yet I am grieved that the concord of Christian people is to be so unworthily destroyed by the artifices of one profane and unlearned Jew, and this too by the assistance of some who profess themselves to be the columns of the Christian faith.[26]

[26] *Ibid.*, 694.

This was a diatribe indeed against poor Pfeffercorn, who was, as far as history tells us, sincere even though injudicious. To any enemy who was without protection Erasmus was merciless, while no one could surpass him in kindness and forbearance when the enemy was backed by influential and powerful friends.

We can glean from what he says above that the reason he abandoned England as a permanent residence was not that England had been parsimonious with him, but because it was simply a case of getting more from Le Sauvage, with the added advantage of living under his own government and amongst his own countrymen, which was a very natural wish. So many sovereigns, bishops, and wealthy men of literary tastes had now invited him to share their honors and riches that he could afford to pick and choose, and the numerous offers had made the choice increasingly difficult. Add to this his haunting fear that by accepting the bounty of anyone he might be sacrificing his independence of thought and action, and we can easily see what his eventual course of action would be, namely, that he would maintain his independence at any cost. Archbishop Albert of Mainz, the famous Margrave of Brandenburg, who became a leading personage in the vexed matter of *Indulgences,* had written him a very flattering letter in which he styled him "the ornament of Germany," and told him that he considered himself blessed in having lived in the same period as Erasmus; while the Bishop of Utrecht, who was of the royal house of Burgundy, had written to tell him that as soon as he had returned from Overyssel he was going to invite him to visit him, and would then take the opportunity to show him how much he thought of him. But Erasmus preferred to stay at Louvain for the present, where he was as happy as it was humanly possible for a man of his temperament to be. He had been honored by his elevation to the Faculty of the University of Louvain and, as he tells Barbirius, felt very much flattered at being called "Master" by the students.[27] He could lift up his head as never before, on account of being relieved of all fear of a forced return to his monastic duties, a favor due to Pope Leo X, as we have seen; and when people now called him an escaped monk, as Pfeffercorn did in one of his pamphlets, though he was irritated as usual, he no longer felt it necessary to make a reply on a subject which was now to him a closed question. This is not to say that he did not feel it just as necessary to placate any of his patrons who, he thought, might have reason to feel offended at his actions; for during all his long life he never knowingly, by any petulant act of his own, imperiled a possible source of revenue, but was always willing to pocket his pride if at the same time he could pocket something more substantial. It is thus that we interpret his letter to Antony, Abbot of St. Bertin, to whom he felt constrained to write at this time:

> Reverend Father. When I was at Ghent recently, I learned too late that you were there, and when I tried to pay you my respects, you were said to have departed. Afterwards I learned from several, and was very much disturbed thereby, that your reverence

[27] *Ibid.,* 695.

was a little vexed with me; on account of the *Folly,* I take it, which an eminent man, George Halluin, translated into French, although I warned and begged him not to do so; that is, from mine he made it his, having added, subtracted, and changed it to suit himself. Add to this, that the bent of the book is jocose, that I do not too harshly assail any class of men, and that I do not pillory any man by name unless it be myself. In the event, this work, such as it is, pleases the erudite everywhere, gives pleasure to bishops, archbishops, kings, Cardinals, and to Leo the Supreme Pontiff himself, who read the whole book from end to end. And if indeed I had gone too far in that work, and others might have taken offense thereat, I had hoped that your Eminence would have been one support at least for me, and that you would be as you always were, one at whose hands I have ever experienced such kindness that kindness itself could be no more so. And so I cannot bring myself to believe that those things are true which some people have said about the matter. I know that the public is wont to say many things which have no foundation, and I have experienced your generosity for many years; hence I rely more on that than on what other people say. I know what a difference there is between St. Bertin's abbot and Briselot, although both names begin with the same letter. In any case I beg that you will continue to love your Erasmus, even on that account that you loved me long ago. For if ever I merited the favor of men like you (and I dare to say this rather from confidence in myself than from any feeling of arrogance), I especially deserve it at present; but of this fact posterity will judge more correctly after I am dead, although there are not lacking those who perceive this already.[28]

This certainly sounds exalted enough, but no one could yield compliance more obsequiously to the humors of the great. In fact, Erasmus uses St. Paul as his authority that one should yield to the time.[29] But St. Paul says so only by means of Erasmus' own emendation: for he had apparently just decided to change the usual reading of this passage, since in his edition of the *New Testament* in 1516 he had retained the accepted Κυρίου, while his substitution τῷ καιρῷ on which his assumption of Paul's authority is based, appears only subsequently, in the next edition, that of 1519.

Albert of Brandenburg who, as we have stated, was Archbishop of Mainz, desired Erasmus to write the lives of the saints, but he replied that he had tried to thrown some light on the greatest saint of them all, referring, of course, to his edition of the works of St. Jerome. As a matter of fact, the Archbishop, in common with many others who knew Erasmus only by his writings, had conceived a very exalted opinion of his personal godliness, such as a perusal of his *Enchiridion,* or in fact any of his works up to that time except his *Praise of Folly,* might lead one to form. The mental picture which they treasured of him was that of a man ascetic to a degree, self-sacri-

[28] *Ibid.,* 739. [29] "Tempori seruiendum, etiam Paulo autore." (*Ibid.,* 740.)

ficing, seeking nothing for himself, but all things for God, free from the petty failings of other and smaller men; one who had devoted his great talents to the intellectual and spiritual uplifting of his fellowmen from purely altruistic reasons. How much of this was true we shall not attempt to point out, preferring to leave each reader free in his judgment of the matter. But this is what he said to the Archbishop:

> However, I can hardly express in words how much I love your character, since, while still young and burdened with worldly more than religious cares, you have it especially at heart that the lives of the saints, which are considered partly to resemble old women's tales, and partly to be such a sort of writing that no learned or dignified man can read them without becoming nauseated, should first be issued with better selection and greater accuracy, and, secondly, in a style, if not eloquent, at least clean and pure. Your Eminence naturally perceives, what indeed is most true, that it wonderfully beautifies the Christian religion that nothing should ever be chanted or read in the churches at all that does not please the most dignified and learned, that is, what is not drawn from the Sacred Scriptures, or from characters eminent beyond all doubt.[30]

Aristocracy of birth or rank is not the only aristocracy. Here we see the aristocracy of intellect which looks down upon the lowly and simple-minded and would chide them for their ignorance. How Erasmus would have made the illiterate peasants of his day read and digest St. Paul when they could not even read at all for several generations yet to come, after printing had made books cheaper and education more general, is a problem to which he has left no answer; but we still linger lovingly over the saintly traditions of those who have gone before as handed down to us in the lives of the saints; and, if the effect is ultimately edifying and uplifting spiritually, it matters not much if scientific investigation may here and there find a flaw in the testimony. Occasionally, too, science has belied its name and failed in its mission.

Erasmus was still engaged on the huge task of revising his first edition of the *New Testament,* which had proved unsatisfactory to the learned world on account of the many mistakes of commission and omission which were to be found in it. As he himself admits, the work was issued in too much of a hurry, and in consequence suffered in its accuracy. While he was laboriously reëditing it, the thought occurred to him to get out a paraphrase of the Sacred Text, which might serve as commentary and explanation equally. The first part which he issued was the *Paraphrase on the Epistle to the Romans,* published by Froben in November of this year 1517, and dedicated to Cardinal Grimani at Rome. The work was well done and was valuable in its object; but men were beginning to scan his work more closely and were entertaining suspicions of his orthodoxy. Even his friends were sometimes astounded at his boldness and lack of reverence for the traditional.

[30] Eras. Ep. 745, ll. 40 *sqq.*

Paschalius Berselius, writing to him about the effect that the *Paraphrase* had on him personally, declared that it made Erasmus seem formidable in his eyes. Erasmus soothed him by saying that although the work might terrify him, yet on closer inspection it would please him.[31] As for the Cardinal, he never even acknowledged the dedication, although no one was better disposed to scholarship and scholars than he, for he exerted himself to the utmost in order to assist Reuchlin in his contest with Hoogstraaten and Pfeffercorn, and of this we have Erasmus' testimony.[32]

Increasing years seem to have aggravated his suspicious nature, but to the day of his death he could never understand why he made enemies. Writing to Glareanus on the 18th of January, 1518, he says:

> I rejoice that you are appreciated by Faber [Stapulensis], a man in my opinion who is learned, upright, and kind, were it not that he is so unlike himself in relation to me. I know this is brought about by the instigation of others.[33]

He had the same opinion of Dorp, Lee, and Stunica, as the reader may remember. Later on in this same epistle, he shows that he is somewhat in fear of Faber's pen, and invokes Glareanus' good offices:

> He [Faber] is working on a reply to me, I hear, but I would dissuade him from such a course because I am sorry to give such a handle to those beasts who, on account of their extreme youth, dare not descend themselves into the arena, but by a tyrannic trick would involve us with each other; yet I will not seek to prevent him lest I may seem to lack confidence in my own position. One thing I do ask of you in view of your intimacy with the man, that you admonish him to abstain from his witty sallies; otherwise he may find me not entirely toothless, hence perhaps later he may have reason to be sorry.[34]

Again he betrays his suspicious nature in a letter to Nesen, of the same date as the one of Glareanus:

> About Faber's reply to me on which some say he is engaged, I am not at all concerned. . . . But, if at the instigation of others he shall again assail me offensively, perhaps I shall not be able to compel my mind to my former moderation.[35]

This certainly sounds like scolding, and is undoubtedly due to overwork and nervous exhaustion. He was desperately afraid of what Faber might say against him, and begged Budé by every possible means to turn Faber's mind from all hostile intent. However, there is no evidence that Faber ever meditated making a reply to him, so his suspicions went for naught. It strikes one as almost pitiful that this man with his gigantic intellect should be so sensitive about what others said or thought of him. He dreaded the making of enemies, but could never

[31] *Ibid.*, 748, 756.
[32] *Ibid.*, I, p. 43.
[33] *Ibid.*, 766.
[34] *Idem.*
[35] *Ibid.*, 768.

on that account restrain either his tongue or his pen. Imagine his saying of Lord Mountjoy, his savior from poverty, his friend when all others fell away from him, his patron when he had not yet shown what his deserving was to be, his constant source of pecuniary assistance when all other sources had failed, the one man in all England who had welcomed him and given him the freedom of his home, his purse, and his friends—imagine his colossal ingratitude when he says: "Mountjoy is like himself, either promising or complaining." [36]

A rest from his years of effort, from wearing anxieties, from his obsessions and animosities—for there is nothing which exhausts the nerve power so quickly as hatred—freedom from all the carking cares that had fretted him since boyhood: these would have given us an Erasmus not less great intellectually, but surely more normal. His *New Testament,* from which he had expected nothing of the world save commendation, had resulted far otherwise, for he had been forced in self-defense to spend long and laborious effort in freeing the work from the errors which haste and injudicious changes in the text had caused. How distasteful such labor is to great literary minds is common knowledge, and it must have been a sickening and discouraging task to a man like him. The fact that there were mistakes to rectify, that there were acknowledgments of errors to be made, was particularly humiliating to him, and the work lay on his soul like an incubus. But his reputation demanded the sacrifice of his pride, and he had now performed the duty to the best of his ability. So it was ready for the printers, but he had not yet decided whether to entrust it to the press of Froben at Basle, or to that of Aldus at Venice. Above all things money was requisite, and just then funds were low. But although he had decided to refuse the flattering offers that both England and France had made him in consideration of taking up his abode in either of those countries, he had been careful not to burn his bridges; and so, when the journey to either Basle or Rome and the attendant expenditure necessary thereupon presented themselves to his mind, immediately those offers took on increased importance. Without delay he wrote to his friends in both courts to ascertain what present cash could be raised for his impending needs, and dangled before them the chance of winning him thereby to their wishes. Budé was the correspondent in France whom he essayed to sound as to what he might expect from the French court. Budé, who, if not a greater scholar, was a better man of business and knew Erasmus better apparently than that rather selfish individual knew himself, proceeded to nail him down to terms. After telling him again what he might rely upon from the French monarch in the way of stipend and benefices, he puts the issue squarely up to Erasmus as follows:

> Come, my somewhat fastidious friend, examine, consult, and decide for yourself whether you will be one of us or not, and cease making laughing-stocks of us, if I may use a Plautian phrase. Tell us how much of a stipend will satisfy you to come and grow old with us, to which presently will be added a benefice according to

[36] *Ibid.,* 775.

his [the king's] judgment. If you can induce yourself to pass over to us, you will, I think, be welcomed by many of my countrymen.[37]

But to be bound down to say yes or no was the last thing in the world that Erasmus desired; so he left the matter dangling. He had previously written to the only man who never failed him, Archbishop Warham, and had received at last something towards his journey:

> Most Reverend Prelate, the only appreciator and patron of my studies, I hope you are well. The poets divide their plays into five acts. The fifth act of this comedy of mine still remains to be played, which would that I might so play that I may merit the applause of the good, but especially that Christ, our only judge, may approve! I am going either to Venice or Basle, and each road is long and dangerous, particularly the one through Germany, not only on account of the inveterate system of robberies but also because of the plague, which has carried off Lachner, the manager of Froben's printing office, as also many others. Now if I go to Italy, my expenses will be larger by reason of the various happenings which are wont to occur unexpectedly. I have it in mind to augment my library with the best books which are being daily printed in Italy. I am compelled to be present at the work on my *New Testament*. The task is perplexing, and if I am not there nothing will be done as I wish it. In whatever part of the world I shall be, I shall be your humble client. If I return safely, it is my intention to migrate to England, as to a hidden and remote refuge; and I trust that your kindness will increase my little fortune, since day by day old age is approaching, and daily more and more I understand the last chapter of *Ecclesiastes*.[38] If I do not return safely, it will cheer me to die in what is, if I mistake not, a pious undertaking. . . .
>
> Oh, if I had such a horse as the one you formerly sent to the Abbot of St. Bertin's by me! Many wonder at my undertaking such a journey at my time of life; but I might wonder at the Bishop of Paris who has taken longer journeys at almost seventy, and for affairs that I deem of less moment. Pray, treat my servant kindly and send him back to me quickly, so that I may not be delayed, and continue to assist your Erasmus. Never shall I deem myself unhappy while you are spared to me. Farewell, your lordship, to whom I devote and consecrate myself.[39]

When Luther felt the pinch of poverty he used to console himself

[37] *Ibid.*, 810, ll. 370-5.

[38] It is within the bounds of probability that he here referred to the verses of Ecclesiastes which read as follows:

"Remember thy Creator in the days of thy youth, before the time of affliction come, and the years draw nigh of which thou shalt say: They please me not . . .

Before the silver cord be broken, and the golden fillet shrink back, and the pitcher be crushed at the fountain, and the wheel be broken upon the cistern,

And the dust return unto its earth from whence it was, and the spirit return to God who gave it.

Vanity of vanities, said Ecclesiastes, and all things are vanity."

[39] Eras. Ep. 781.

with a sincere and ardent faith that the Lord would provide. Not so with Erasmus, who had expensive tastes in the matters of food, wines, and attendance, and who reserved for himself the office of providing against every contingency in such things. He had now reached the summit of his fame, and was known in all the learned circles of Europe as the greatest writer of the age. His books were bought up eagerly as soon as issued, for they exhibited in brilliant, witty, and attractive form all the learning of all the centuries. The Pope, with the Cardinals and bishops everywhere, had done him honor; and he counted as his friends kings, princes, and potentates who were eager to support and maintain him with their wealth of patronage. He had a passion for the comforts of life, and even for one or two of its luxuries; and his more or less covert hints that presents of money or jewels were acceptable to him form a disagreeable chapter in his history. His principal ambition was to be considered the acknowledged sovereign of the literary world, and he ill brooked a rival near his throne. His jealousy of others on this point is also unpleasant to contemplate, and was, if he had only realized it, entirely unnecessary. For the world has long ago given him the highest niche in the temple of fame as compared with all his contemporaries; and that estimate of his works, as far as their wonderful literary merit is involved, has never since been called into question.

CHAPTER VI

CONSIDERATION OF MARTIN LUTHER

But a change was at hand, and another was destined to occupy the centre of that stage which Erasmus had so recently and so industriously won the right to possess. That other was Martin Luther, a man as different from him as it is possible to conceive. Both were monks, and we may assume that their preliminary training had been the same. Erasmus was now fifty-one years old, while Luther was but thirty-four, a fact to which, in their early relations, was accorded the respect due it from the younger man. Erasmus was twenty-two years and Luther twenty-three years old when each took his final vows; and both were intellectually mature beyond the average at that critical moment. But at once we begin to be struck with the evident differences of character which each manifested. Erasmus had a sort of courage which was mostly craftiness; Luther's was impetuous and often ill advised. Erasmus openly confessed that he did not aspire to the honors of martyrdom, and admitted that he would probably play the traitor as St. Peter did if he were put to the test.[1] Luther, on the contrary, often declared that he was ready to give up his life for his principles. Erasmus was always in fear that he might suffer want, and placed no confidence in the care of a watchful Providence; Luther cared not much what he ate, or wherewith he was clad, and never dreaded poverty for himself. Erasmus feared a conflict; Luther gloried in a fight. Erasmus launched his arrows always hoping that they would not injure his own interests; Luther hurled his club regardless of the consequences to himself. Erasmus winced at the slightest censure; Luther stood unmoved when all the Christian world, except a few students at Wittemberg, held him in abhorrence. Erasmus' chief aims were the advancement of learning and the gratifying of personal animosities; Luther subordinated learning to the spread of his own peculiar convictions. Both were abnormal in that they harbored obsessions, were superstitious, had a firm credence in a personal devil, and believed in witches, portents, and apparitions. Of Erasmus' weakness in this respect we have already spoken; let us see how Luther stood in this same regard. In the year 1533 there appeared in the sky a strange phenomenon, which Justus Jonas described as follows:

> In the month of October, and lasting from ten to twelve at night, full in the presence of the multitude who were observing it, there appeared in the four regions of the sky many thousand fiery torches, the color of flame and really glowing, the like of which

[1] Eras. Ep. 1218.

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Luther declared he had never seen. On another occasion, and at almost the same time of night, there was heard in the air a noise as of armies rushing together.

Thereupon Jonas relates that Luther, "a despiser of the Devil, and aware of all his attacks, considering these things as tricks of the Evil One who was trying to frighten men by false terrors, if he could not by real ones, etc." [2]

But it is in his *Table-Talk* that Luther's obsessions are most striking and manifest. He felt that there was to be constant warfare between himself and the devil, and that his satanic enemy did not scruple to use weapons and methods which were purely material. He complained that his stay in the castle of Wartburg was made very disagreeable for him by the evil one, who insisted on tumbling various objects around his chamber. He began to imagine things, especially strange noises and apparitions. He had put some hazel-nuts in a chest, and at night he would hear them rolling around. At other times he heard objects falling on the stairs, and more than once saw a black dog on his bed. There is of course the tradition that he once became so exasperated at the devil, whom he held responsible for these annoyances, that he threw an ink-bottle at him, the missile passing through his infernal tormentor and leaving on the wall a great black splotch which was pointed out to the curious and gullible of following generations. He believed that Satan had innumerable lesser devils to assist him:

> Not all of them little devils [he would say], but there are land-devils and devil-princes, who are experienced and have practiced for a very long time, over five thousand years, and have become most shrewd and cunning. We have the big devils who are Doctors of Divinity; the Turks and Papists have bad and petty devils who are not theological but juridical devils. . . . Wherever a fire blazes up, there every time sits a little devil and blows into the flame. . . . and if God had not given us the dear holy angels for guardians and arquebusiers, who are drawn up about us like a bulwark of wagons, it would be soon all over with us.[3]

He was careful not to use contempt, for he believed the devil to be very proud and haughty. Ridicule, however, was permissible. He was sure the devil hated cheerful music, being a mournful and melancholy spirit. During his long nights of insomnia he would behold the devil at the head of the bed sneering at him and trying to terrify him, and the result of all this was so to excite his mind that he was rendered incapable of mental effort and lived in dread of the coming night. It finally drove him from the Wartburg, for he dreaded the wiles of his enemies much less than these vain imaginings of his tortured mind.

As our study of Erasmus has led us to decide definitely that he was a neurasthenic, so our study of Luther has convinced us that he was a psychopath, if not always, then most assuredly at intervals. We are

[2] See Seckendorf, *Comm. de Lutheranismo,* lib. iii, 66.
[3] Luther, *Table-Talk, passim.*

well aware that this statement of ours will be received with surprise by some, with dismay by others, with due consideration by the thinking few, and with undue resentment by the unthinking many. Hence we are bound in all justice to corroborate it with all the proof that such an assertion demands.

His mother Margaret Ziegler was a woman of deep religious convictions, and Melancthon says that she was especially remarkable for her "fear of God, and her constant communion with the Lord in prayer." The father, who was a miner, was a man of great force of character, stern and unyielding in his convictions, and with very little reverence in his make-up. Evidently he was a man of hot temper, for he was said, even in Luther's day, to have killed a man in some altercation. A few of Luther's more recent biographers are inclined to deny this fact, but Luther himself never seems to have done so, even when taunted by some of his opponents on account of it. It was a stern household. He tells us that he was once so severely flogged by his father that he fled from him, and bore him a temporary grudge. He also relates that his mother scourged him, on an occasion when he had stolen a nut, so that the blood came; and that the combined severity of his parents made him shy and timid, according to his own testimony. Köstlin, from whose work we take these details, tells us further that,

> Their strictness, well intended, and proceeding from a genuine earnestness of purpose, furthered in him [Luther] a strictness and tenderness of conscience, which then and in after years made him deeply and keenly sensitive of every fault committed in the eyes of God, a sensitiveness, indeed, which, so far from relieving him of fear, made him apprehensive on account of sins that existed only in his imagination. It was a later consequence of this discipline, as Luther himself informs us, that he took refuge in a convent.[4]

Now it is important to remember in this connection that the killing of the peasant by the elder Luther happened just before the coming of himself and his young wife to Eisleben and, consequently, during the early months of the latter's pregnancy which ended in the birth of Martin. If that is so, then we have to take into account its bearing on the mother and the prenatal effect it may have had on her unborn child. With her deeply religious trend, and her idea of God as a stern and inexorable judge, the killing of a fellow-man by her husband, even though accidental, must have produced a shock to her nervous system the effects of which, coming at a time when most women's nerve inhibition is most unstable, may have been severely felt.

In due time the boy Luther went to school. While there he does not seem to have managed well with his teachers. He called them tyrants and executioners, and the schools themselves prisons and hells. He relates that one morning he was whipped fifteen times for being unable to repeat what he had never been taught. To us of the generation that lived previous to the era of "moral suasion" and that can remember how the rod was feared and hated, all his complaints about teachers are

[4] Köstlin, *Life of Luther*, pp. 11-12. New York and London, 1883.

very familiar. We suspect considerable exaggeration on the part of Luther in this matter, although it is possible that he spoke the real truth. His complaints, however, seem to have had no effect whatever on his father, for he left him at this same school during all his tender years until he reached the age of fourteen. Looking back on these schooldays he intimated in after years that his parents were very hard on him so that he became broken-spirited, and it was from this cause that he subsequently betook himself to a monastery.[5]

Most of us get over our boyish animosities and resentments that real or fancied harshness on the part of parents and teachers have left behind; but it was not so with Luther, who seemed to take a morbid delight in dwelling on his miseries. The modern alienist recognizes in this characteristic a delusion which he classes under "ideas of persecution."

Luther goes on to relate that when his father took him from the school at Mansfeld, after he had gone through his curriculum, he sent him to Magdeburg and afterwards to Eisenach. Now comes a strange thing. Luther says he was sent forth without sufficient provision for his physical necessities, so that he was compelled to gain his daily bread by begging it from strangers or earning it by singing on the streets, until at last he was rescued from this dire need by Frau Cotta, who took him in as a member of her own household. This action of his father seems incredible, even though Luther himself is our authority. Now it is to be considered whether this unnatural conduct on the part of otherwise loving parents has not been imagined, or, at least, exaggerated, by Luther as one of his delusions of persecution; for it is undoubtedly true that this same hard-hearted father sent him to the University of Erfurt and paid his expenses there.

Köstlin goes on to tell us that Luther's mental poise was much disturbed by religious doubts during his residence at the University.

> He could never shake off for any length of time, even when in the midst of learned study or the enjoyment of student life, the consciousness that he must be pious and satisfy all the strict commands of God, that he must make good all the shortcomings of his life, and reconcile himself with heaven, and that an angry Judge was throned above who threatened him with damnation. Inner voices of this kind, in a man of sensitive and tender conscience, were bound to assert themselves the more loudly and earnestly, as, in his progress from youth to manhood, he realized more fully his personal responsibility to God, and also his personal independence.[6]

It was at about this time that he ran across a Latin copy of the Bible, and became particularly immersed in the Old Testament, with which he had hitherto been unacquainted. The story of Samuel and his mother made a special impression on his plastic mind, for it opened up to him the whole subject of patriarchal polygamy, on which he seems always to have loved to dwell. Sex questions were the consequence, and his tender conscience was torn between the desire to gratify his carnal

[5] *Idem.* [6] *Ibid.*, p. 36.

instincts in such passages of the Old Testament and his fear lest such pleasure were sinful in the sight of God. Then, too, the stern and unforgiving character of God, as depicted in the Old Testament, caused him intense anxiety. According to Köstlin:

> Disquieting questions, moreover, now arose in his mind, so sorely troubled with temptation; and his subtle and penetrating intellect, so far from being able to solve them, only plunged him deeper in distress. Was it then really God's will, he asked himself, that he should become actually purged from sin, and thereby be saved? Was not the way to hell or the way to heaven already fixed for him immutably in God's will and decree, by which everything is determined and preordained? And did not the very futility of his endeavors hitherto prove that it was the former fate that hung over him? He was in danger of going utterly astray in his conception of such a God. Expressions in the Bible such as those which speak of serving Him with fear became to him intolerable and hateful. He was seized at times with fits of despair such as might have tempted him to blaspheme God. It was this that he afterwards referred to as the greatest temptation he had experienced while young.[7]

He also had a great and significant fear of death. He accidentally ran the point of his rapier into his leg, cutting one of the larger arteries, and causing the limb to swell subcutaneously. In his terror of death he called upon the Blessed Virgin to help him. That night his terror was renewed when the wound broke open afresh, and again he invoked the Mother of God. Köstlin goes on to tell us that Luther was terribly distressed, a few months after he had taken his degree of M.A., by the sudden death of one of his friends, who was struck dead by lightning at his very side, as the tradition has come down to us.

> Well might the thought even then have occurred to him, while so disturbed in his mind and overpowered by feelings of sadness, whether it would not be better to seek his cure in the monastic holiness recommended by the Church, and to renounce altogether the world and all the success he had hitherto aspired to. The young Master of Arts, as he tells us himself in later years, was indeed a sorrowful man. Returning [from his home] on July 2, [1505], the feast of the Visitation of the Virgin Mary, he was already near Erfurt, when, at the village of Stotternheim, a terrific storm broke over his head. A fearful flash of lightning darted from heaven before his eyes. Trembling with fear, he fell to the earth, and exclaimed, Help, Anna, beloved Saint! I will be a monk. A few days after, when quietly settled again at Erfurt, he repented having used these words. But he felt he had taken a vow, and that, on the strength of that vow, he had obtained a hearing. . . . The Luther of later days declared that his monastic vow was a compulsory one, forced from him by terror and the fear of death. But, at the same time, he never doubted that it was God who urged him.[8]

[7] *Ibid.*, p. 37.

[8] *Ibid.*, pp. 38-9.

In his larger work Köstlin goes more into detail concerning Luther's state of sadness and his fear of death, but the facts given in his smaller work as quoted above are sufficient for our purpose.

We have not space to follow him through the year of his novitiate, but his mental doubts and fears were just as strong in the cloister as they had been before his entrance. In fact, he became more introspective than ever, and the more he subjected his thoughts and actions to his self-dissection, the more transgressions of God's will he found, and the more grievously did they afflict his conscience. His mind became unstable and full of exaggerated thinking. He looked for sins in his most innocent actions, and the more he confessed them and repented of them, the more numerous they became. As he himself put it, "The more we wash ourselves the fouler we become." [9] Although he was sorry for his sins, he never felt that he had won God's forgiveness. This made him do penance in an extreme and immoderate manner, torturing his body, fasting to excess, and imperiling his bodily health, until his Superior Staupitz either persuaded or compelled him to moderate his practices. Thus he spent two years in the monastery amidst these inward strivings and sufferings. He became the admiration of his less ascetic, or perhaps more normal, brethren, and began to be spoken of in the other monasteries of the Order as a saint. He himself tells us afterwards that he felt himself to be "a proud saint" and enjoyed the importance that his superior sanctity gave him amongst his brethren. His moods were alternately those of exaltation and depression, and in the latter his sufferings became so great that he feared he would die.

> Thus he tells us later on, when speaking of the torments of purgatory, of a man, who doubtless was himself, how he had often endured such agony . . . so hellish in its violence . . . that, had it lasted longer, even for half an hour, or only five minutes, he must have died then and there, and his bones have been consumed to ashes. He himself saw afterwards in these pains, visitations of a special kind, such as God does not send to everyone.[10]

The young Luther began to regard himself as a vessel of reprobation, inevitably to be damned, and his physical and mental condition became completely morbid. Evidently his Prior became alarmed for the young monk's life under such circumstances, and, at the next visit of the Provincial John Staupitz, the case was laid before him, and the latter for the first time came in contact with the "gifted, thoughtful, and melancholy young man." Staupitz's first care was to steady Luther and restrain the violence of his ardor, and especially to free his mind from the consuming doubts that had taken possession of it concerning his ultimate salvation.

> He treated Luther, both in conversation and letter, with fatherly confidence, and Luther unlocked to him, as to a father, his heart and its cares. Upon his wishing to confess to him all his many small sins, Staupitz insisted first on distinguishing between what were

[9] "Je langer wir uns waschen je unreiner wir werden."
[10] Köstlin, *op. cit.*, pp. 49-50.

really sins and what were not; as for self-imagined sins, or such a patchwork of offences as Luther laid before him, he would not listen to them; that was not the kind of seriousness, he would say, that God wished to have. Luther tormented himself with a system of penance, consisting of actual pain, punishments, and expiations. Staupitz taught him that repentance in the Scriptural meaning, was an inward change and conversion, which must proceed from the love of holiness and of God; and that, for peace with God, he must not look to his own good resolutions to lead a better life, which he had not the strength to carry out, or to his own acts, which could never satisfy the law of God, but must trust with patience to God's forgiving mercy, and learn to see in Christ, whom God permitted to suffer for the sins of man, not the threatening Judge, but rather the loving Savior.[11]

Gustave Freytag goes more into detail in describing these sufferings of Luther:

At odds with his father, full of terror at the thought of eternity which he could not understand, intimidated by the wrath of God, he entered, with almost convulsive energy, on a life of renunciation, devotion, and penance. He found no peace. . . . That the good were persecuted while the bad were fortunate, that God had damned the race of men with the awful curse of sin because an ignorant woman bit into an apple, and that, on the other hand, the same God bore our sins with love, indulgence and patience; that Christ had on one occasion sent away honest people with harshness, and another time received harlots, publicans, and murderers—"the wisdom of human reason must become foolishness in the face of such things." At such times he would complain to his spiritual adviser, Staupitz: "Dear Doctor, the Lord proceeds so horridly with men; who can serve Him if He strikes about Himself so recklessly?" If the answer was made, "How else could He subdue the stubborn heads?" that intelligent argument could not console the youth. . . .

Every worldly thought, all the impulses of youthful blood, to him became abominable wrongs; he began to despair of himself; he wrestled in endless prayer, fasted and mortified the flesh. On one occasion the brothers were obliged to force an entrance to his cell, in which he had lain for days in a condition not far remote from insanity. The warmest sympathy moved Staupitz as he looked upon these convulsive torments, and he would attempt to comfort him by rather rude speeches. Once, when Luther had written to him: "O my sin, sin, sin!" the spiritual adviser answered: "You want to be without sin and have no real sin. Christ is the pardon of real sins. . . . If Christ is to help you, you should have a register enumerating the real sins, and not approach Him with such trifling and doll sins, and make of every bubble a sin." [12]

[11] *Ibid.*, pp. 52-3. (All this has been beautifully expressed by Staupitz in his little book entitled *Ein Buchlin von der Nachfolgung des willigen Sterbens Christi.* Leipzig, 1515.)

[12] Freytag, *Martin Luther,* translated by Heinemann, pp. 26-7. Chicago, 1897.

It was at this period that he first became aware of the fact that something was wrong with his head. He insisted that when he first became a monk he "stormed the very heavens," that he "nearly perished in the cold," that he "so afflicted and tortured his body that he could not have stood it very long"; and of having prayed, fasted, watched, and inflicted punishment on his body, and "so seriously injured his head that he had not recovered, and never should as long as he lived." [13]

Later he says:

> "I verily kept the rules of the Order with great diligence and zeal. I often fasted till I was sick and well-nigh dead. Not only did I observe the rules straitly, but I took on myself other tasks, and had a peculiar way by myself. My seniors strove against this my peculiarity, and with good reason. I was a shameful persecutor and destroyer of my own body; for I fasted, prayed, watched, and made myself weary and languid beyond what I could endure. . . . Doubts all the while cleaved to my conscience, and I thought within myself, Who knoweth whether this is pleasing and acceptable to God, or not. . . . Even when I was the most devout, I went as a doubter to the altar, and as a doubter I came away again. If I made my confession, I was still in doubt; if, upon that, I left off prayer, I was again in doubt, for we were wrapped in the conceit that we could not pray and should not be heard, unless we were wholly pure and without sin, like the saints in heaven. . . .
>
> "When I was a monk, I used oft-times to be very contrite for my sins, and to confess them all as much as possible; and I performed the penance that was enjoined unto me as straightly and as rigorously as I could. Yet for all this, my conscience could never be tranquil and assured, but I was always in doubt, and said to myself, This or that thou has not done rightly; thou wast not sorrowful enough for thy sins; this and that sin thou didst forget in thy confession." Though he "confessed every day, it was all in vain." "The smart and anguish of conscience," he elsewhere says, "were as great in the cowl as they were before out of it." [14]

This last remark is enlightening as showing us that he suffered from this obsessional over-repression even before he was a monk, and that it was a symptom that had appeared at, or shortly before, puberty. Sears goes on to tell us that

> Luther's mind had an individuality which separated him from the mass and heightened his solitude. In the mental processes through which he passed, he was alone and without sympathy. He was driven at last, almost to phrensy. Often was his bodily frame overpowered by the intensity of his excited feelings, and there was no skilful physician of the soul at hand to prescribe for his case. . . . "In my huge temptation, which consumed my body so that I well-nigh lost my breath, and hardly knew whether I had still any brain or not, there was no one to comfort me." If he opened his heart to

[13] Sears, *Luther*, p. 78.

[14] *Ibid.*, pp. 78-81.

any one, the only reply he received was, "I know nothing about such temptations," and he was left to the gloomy conclusion, that he "was to be alone in this disconsolate state." [At one time] he says, "When I was young, I loved allegories to such a degree that I thought every thing must be turned into allegories." [Writing in after days] to George, Duke of Saxony, [about this period of his life he describes his hopelessness as follows:] "When only a small temptation of death or of sin came upon me, I fell away, and found no succor either in baptism or in the monastic state. Then was I the most miserable man on earth; day and night there was nothing but lamentation and despair, from which no one could deliver me.[15]

We shall also quote from Lamprecht,[16] who says:

He was more than painstaking in his observance of the rules of the Order; he fasted beyond measure, he chastised himself, was engrossed with endless meditations, and persevered in the *narcosis of ecstasy until he believed himself among the angelic choirs.* No works-possibility of the old Church for justification in perfection but was exhausted. But what Luther especially sought he did not find. Neither faintness from bodily flagellation, nor occasional ecstatic union with a pantheistic, etherealized god decoyed him from the ever more mighty demand of his soul to possess a personal, enduring relation to God. It was the opposite that took place. The more all the means of the Church were exhausted, even those of the sacraments, particularly of penance, *in which his confessors did not understand him, the more frightful was the lonesomeness, the Godforsakeness of his position. He was tending towards the abyss of despair and of insanity,* etc.[17]

After his novitiate of two years he was ordained a priest, which brought to his unstable mind new fears and fresh anxieties. During the celebration of his first mass, he was so overpowered with awe at the sacredness of the occasion, that he could scarcely remain at the altar, and was like a dead man, as he afterwards expressed it.

Staupitz not only endeavored to free his mind from its cankering doubts by resolving these doubts directly, but in addition, not satisfied with this, he also changed his mental and physical environment by bringing him back with him to Wittemberg to lecture on philosophy. The change was a happy one, and does eminent credit to Staupitz's judgment; for, instead of the hopelessness, the morbid introspection, and the submissive placidity of the cloister, his mind took on an extraordinary development of buoyancy, of external vision, and of self-confidence. His judgment cleared, and his mind sought saner scope for its activities. In this office he was not long in gradually obtaining control of himself and, in some measure, verging to the other extreme of excessive self-confidence. At times he even surprised himself by indulging in a certain

[15] *Ibid.*, pp. 82, 83, 85, 88, 89.
[16] *Deutsche Geschichte*, Vol. V, p. 225.
[17] Quoted from Denifle's *Luther und Luthertum*, Volz translation, p. 386. The italics are mine.

arrogance of speech, for which he could furnish to himself no adequate explanation. He manifested such an ability to impress and control others that Staupits soon took advantage of this latent power to make him an assistant to himself, and delivered over to his management forty monasteries of their Order, which position he ably and honorably filled for several years. Indeed, such was the confidence that the worthy Staupitz eventually placed in him that in 1510 he sent him to Rome on some business of the Order, a visit that was destined to remain in Luther's mind forever, and to which he often reverted.

But even at the University his head did not feel right, and he was not always sure of his own mental processes. It was with some misgiving that he wrote to Spalatin of his safe arrival from his visitation of the various monasteries under his charge, "sound in body, but God knows whether or not in sound mind," he puts it.[18] In another passage about this time he says: "I admit to you that my life is daily approaching hell, because I daily become worse and more wretched."[19] In spite of the fact that he was living a most exemplary life, his fearful doubts still frequently made him miserable, and, as he said of this period in after years, "In the midst of this holiness and self-righteousness, I cherished continued distrust, doubt, fear, hatred, and blasphemy of God, and my righteousness was nothing but a cesspool, in which the devil took his little fun."[20] He gives us innumerable evidences that his temptations were of the flesh, and that he feared for his own ability to control himself. But he was generally cautious enough to make his statements general, and not to admit his weakness in this regard. Writing in 1516, he says:

> If a mandate were to be issued that no priest should remain without a wife, wear a tonsure, or priestly dress, or even recite his office, how many do you imagine would choose their present life? Their service is compulsory, and they look for liberty when their flesh longs for it. I fear that at present we are all going to destruction.[21]

Later on he exclaims, "I am inflamed with carnal pleasure, while I ought to be fervent in spirit. I am on fire with the great flame of my unbridled flesh, and sit here in leisure and laziness neglecting prayer."

He rapidly deteriorated from this time on. He began to find his vow of chastity very onerous, and wrote a book on the validity of vows in general. He became by degrees unwilling or unable to resist his imperious carnal passions, and allowed his mind to run riot therein. At times he realized that he was deteriorating, as when he wrote to Staupitz: "I am a man exposed to and carried away by company, drinking, carnal excitement, negligence, and other distressing things," and he had prefaced this statement by asserting that "God was hurrying, driving, not to say, dragging" him along, and that he was not in his own control. These statements he made to Staupitz, who, as we have seen, knew the

[18] De Wette, *Luthers Briefe, Sendschreiben, und Bedenken,* Vol. I, p. 24. Berlin, 1825.
[19] See Enders, *Dr. Martin Luthers Briefwechsel,* Vol. I, p. 76.
[20] Denifle, *op. cit.,* p. 433. [21] Luther, *Ep. to the Romans.*

state of Luther's mind better than our troubled monk knew it.[22] And then, in a humble and mournful tone, he asks Staupitz to pray for him, and seems to realize the desperate case in which he finds himself.

> Oh, I know it well [he exclaims] when the devil comes and excites the flesh, and sets it on fire. Therefore let one bethink himself well beforehand and prove himself, whether he can live in chastity; for when the fire is burning, I well know how it is. . . . I have not so much of myself, that I can keep continent. Some have written whole books on how to be continent, saying that there is something unclean and filthy about a woman, and that Ovid's *De Remedio Amoris* may be beneficial, though, in truth, the reading of it only stimulates one the more. When the attack comes and the flesh is on fire, you are already blind, even though the woman is not of the more beautiful sort. One would do well to take dung and use it as an extinguisher, if he has no water.[23]

With regard to intemperance also he began to deteriorate. We may not be justified in attaching much importance to the statement of Aleander, one of his opponents, who remarked, "I leave aside the drunkenness to which Luther was commonly addicted"; but we have Luther's own testimony on the matter. Writing from the Wartburg he says: "I sit here the whole day *idle and drunk.*" In the following year he specifies that he is writing in the morning, *sober*. When twitted with it in after years he gave as sufficient reason for his drinking that he wanted to spite the devil. "What other do you think might be the reason why I drink more heavily, prate more loosely, and carouse more frequently than to mock and vex the devil, who has set himself to mock and vex me?" Denifle, who has collected most of the details, goes on to say:

> We find him frequently in a state of tipsy jollity. On the evening of May 29 [1536], for instance, he supped in company with Lucas Cranach and others, at the residence of W. Musculus, who tells us about it. "After that," said Musculus, "we went to Cranach's house and *drank* again. Having left there, we *conducted* Luther to his dwelling, where again there was copious drinking in the Saxon fashion. Luther was wonderfully jolly."[24]

As is known, he suffered greatly, in 1530, from a buzzing in the head. On January 15, 1531, he wrote to Link: "The headache which I got from old wine at Coburg has not yet been overcome by the Wittemberg beer." He arrived at Coburg April 16, 1530, and stayed, with interruptions, until October 4. During this time he complains continually of his headache, of the buzzing in his head.

The following is excerpted from the report of the apothecary who made an examination of Luther's dead body. By the order of the doctors he was to apply a clyster to Luther, who lay dead, though it was thought he might possibly be revived:

[22] De Wette, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 231. [23] Denifle, *op. cit.*, p. 108. [24] *Ibid.*, 109.

> As the apothecary was applying the tube, he heard several loud winds discharged into the clyster-bag. In consequence of his intemperate eating and drinking, Luther's body was wholly bloated with cachetic humors. He had kept a well-stocked kitchen, and a superabundance of sweet and foreign wines. It is told of him, in fact, that every noon and night, he drank a sexta of sweet foreign wine.[25]

So much for the apothecary's testimony. In one of his letters he complains that "on account of weakness" he is unable to tarry with the students over their beer. "The beer is good, the [bar]maid is pretty, the students young."[26] We notice other marks of deterioration in his character, such as affirming that polygamy was not immoral. To this fact is attributable his lamentable weakness in yielding his consent to the demand of Philip of Hesse, who wanted to take a second wife without the preliminary divorcing of the first; making, as his only condition, the provision that Philip should keep the matter quiet. Even as early as 1520 this decay of his moral fibre was evident, for in that year he advised a woman, who had no children by her husband and could not keep chaste, to seek a divorce from him. If the husband was unwilling, she should get his consent to her cohabiting with another, or with her husband's brother in secret marriage, and the child should be ascribed to the first husband. If he was unwilling to this, "Rather than permit her to burn or to commit adultery, I would advise her to marry another, and to flee to some unknown place. What else can be advised to one who continually suffers from the danger of carnal lust?" Such erratic doings as these are hard to explain, except on the hypothesis that Luther was mentally unbalanced. Bayne, who has written a very sympathetic life of Luther, is compelled by the evidence to admit this as true, and puts his thought into these words: "That his temperament was one of genius, subject to the momentary flashes and eccentric impulses of genius, is beyond question; and it is highly probable that there was a trace of epilepsy in his constitution."[27]

He was frightfully violent at times in both word and act, and seemed to have no control over himself. Many a time did Spalatin and others of his friends feel called upon to remonstrate with him over his fits of passion.[28] We even have a record of his having struck Melancthon in the face during one of these fits of uncontrollable anger. He was full of inconsistencies. He thirsted for the crown of martyrdom but fiercely resented an attack of piles:

> The Lord has struck me in the behind with a great distress, for so hard are my dejections that I am compelled to void them with much strain and sweat, and the longer I retain them the harder they become. Yesterday, which made the fourth day, I had one evacuation, after which I did not sleep the whole night, nor am I yet out of pain.[29]

[25] See the original document in N. Paulus, *Luther's Lebensende*, p. 5. Mainz, 1896.
[26] Enders, *op. cit.*, Vol. X, p. 137.
[27] *Martin Luther*, Vol. I, p. 165.
[28] See De Wette, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 418.
[29] *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 2.

This was when he was hidden away in the Wartburg, where the reaction from the Diet of Worms seems to have totally unhinged him. He began to have delusions in which the devil visited and tortured him, and it was in one of these attacks that he is said to have hurled his ink-bottle at the satanic visitor. He always had a thorough belief in a real, personal devil, and kept it to the end of his days. In his retreat at the castle of Wartburg his old temptations came back on him more sorely than ever; and as the exaltation of his mind, caused by his attitude before the Diet of Worms, gradually evanesced, extreme dejection and melancholy took possession of him. He began again to doubt of his salvation and, though he longed for death, he feared to die. To Melancthon he unburdened himself, saying:

> Such is the anger of God, that daily I more and more sit idly and doubt whether, with the exception of children, He will save anyone from the control of Satan, so much has my God abandoned me. . . . Your high opinion of me confounds and distresses me, since I am here sitting at my ease, irrational and stolid, praying little and grieving little, alas, for the Church of God, but all burned up with the ardent flames of my untamed flesh; in a word, I who ought to be fervent in spirit, burn in my flesh with lust, and am so lazy, slothful, and somnolent, that I know not if God has turned away from me because you do not pray for me. . . . It is now eight days since I have written a word, nor do I pray or study, harassed partly by temptations of the flesh, and partly by other troubles. . . . Pray for me, I beg of you, for in this solitary place I am plunged in sin.[30]

This was his wretched and desperate condition when he first took the resolution to find some means of destroying the vows of monks and nuns, and thus to bring relief to his own tortured flesh. He tells Melancthon that he is convinced of the fact that celibacy is a mere human institution and, consequently, can be changed at will. Immediately he set about writing his book on monastic vows for the purpose of destroying their validity; for, says he, "There is nothing I would like so much as to succor monks and nuns, so sorry am I for these wretched young men and women who are harassed by pollutions and lust."[31] It is in this same letter that he gives Melancthon the astounding advice to "be a sinner, and sin boldly, but trust and rejoice in Christ all the more firmly, since He is the conqueror of sin, death, and the world. We must therefore sin as long as we are what we are."[32] This surely was abnormal, and one would like to have been able to look on his countenance while he said it. It brings to mind the remark of Cajetan, the papal nuncio, regarding Luther, after questioning him at Worms: "I do not wish to have anything more to say to the beast. He has deep-set eyes, and there are strange thoughts in that head of his." Clearly Cajetan had some misgivings about Luther's sanity at that moment, or perhaps he thought him possessed of a devil.

Luther could not remove his mind from the subject of his sexual urge for any length of time, and allusions to it are evident in many of his

[30] *Ibid.*, Vol. II, pp. 9, *22 sqq.* [31] *Ibid.*, p. 35. [32] *Ibid.*, p. 37.

letters: "The name of nun, monk, and priest seems odious to mine ears, and I judge marriage to be a paradise, even though accompanied by extreme poverty." [33] And again, speaking of his solitude at the Wartburg, he exclaims impatiently, "It is your duty to write to me, for now am I truly and really a monk. . . . Yet no monk am I, for there are here many wicked and astute demons who usurp my time unpleasantly." [34] At the same time he informs his correspondent that he is going to "put an end to religious vows, and to liberate young people from this infernal itching of celibacy, with its most unclean and damnable pollutions." [35]

But it is clear that, though he aimed at a general result, his immediate concern was with his own physical exigencies. Writing to John Lange at this same period of his stay at the Wartburg, he says: "I am well in health and properly cared for, but I am also well buffeted about by my sins and temptations." [36]

His old friend and superior, John Staupitz, wrote to him and told him that his goings-on were the chief subject of conversation in every brothel, but Luther replied that he did not care. He was possessed of the idea that he was a prophet of the Lord, and told Staupitz, "I am going to destroy that papistical rule of abomination and perdition. You can see the design of God in these things and the might of His hand." [37] It was just at this time that Luther took into his own care the nine nuns, whom his work on the religious vows had alienated from their profession, and who had consented to be wrested from their convent to take shelter with him, having no other place to go. Such proximity was not very good for a man who has been telling us of his violent carnal temptations. Writing to Nicholas Hausmann, he said: "My health is good, but I am so distracted with what is going on here that the things of the spirit are almost extinguished, and receive little attention. Pray for me that I may not be burned up by the flesh." [38] How long he struggled before he gave way we know not, but one of these nine nuns was Catherine von Bora whom he afterwards married.

From the rôle of prophet he now passed to that of an apostle, and, in imitation of St. Paul, more particularly, he began to send out "Epistles" to his followers in various cities of Germany, whom he addresses as "Christians." For instance, we have such as these, "To the Christians in Liefland," and "To the Christians at Stettin," as also "To the Christians at Wittemberg," and many other examples where he plainly assumes the tone and attitude of St. Paul in his epistles. In the most lofty and assured manner he assumed to himself the rôle of solving all their theological difficulties, and arrogated to himself all the spiritual power of interpreting the meaning of the Scriptures that he now denied to the Church. From this time on one hitherto constant note in his correspondence ceases, and we hear no more bewailings about the burnings and concupiscences of his flesh. Since he took upon himself the care of the runaway nuns he had become remarkably jolly, so that one is tempted to

[33] *Ibid.*, p. 91.
[34] *Ibid.*, p. 92.
[35] *Ibid.*, p. 95.
[36] *Ibid.*, p. 116.
[37] *Ibid.*, p. 215.
[38] *Ibid.*, p. 333.

consider a relation between the two events. He thus writes to Spalatin, who had evidently heard some gossip about him:

> . . . Moreover, concerning what you write me about my marrying, I do not want you to be surprised that I do not marry, since I am such a famous lover. What is stranger still, that, writing so many times about marriage and having to do with women, I have not long ago become a woman, not to talking about marrying one.[39] Although if you are looking for me to set you the example, I have given you a most potent one, for I have had three wives at the same time; and so vigorously have I loved them that I have lost two of them who are about to accept other spouses, while the third I barely hold by her left arm, and she will be probably snatched away from me. And you, you lazy lover, have not the courage to become husband to one.[40]

His attitude on the sex question seems completely changed from this time forward, though after his own marriage to one of these nuns he admits that even marriage does not prevent the concupiscence of the flesh.

The main points that illustrate Luther's mental aberrations are:

1. His early ideas of being persecuted.
2. The instability of his mind, which was for so long torn with doubts and fears for his ultimate salvation.
3. His dread of death.
4. His penances and self-torturings in the monastery.
5. His struggle with more than a common sexual urge until he was seized with something which his brethren said resembled insanity, and which caused him to lie for days together in a sort of stupor.
6. His melancholy and fits of despair.
7. His frequent complaints of trouble in his head.
8. His belief that God was driving him and the devil was assailing him.
9. His drinking habits.
10. The deterioration of his character which was evident in his weakly yielding to Philip of Hesse in the latter's request to be allowed two wives, and his own expressed belief that no man or woman can remain chaste.
11. His violence of word and act which made him call everyone who displeased him such names as ass, snake, fool, sometimes applying to them filthy epithets, and showing loss of control in many other ways, as notably in the matter of striking Melancthon in the face.
12. His megalomania which led him to assume the manner and authority of St. Paul in writing to his followers, addressing them in the style of that apostle's "Epistles."

Because of insufficient objective data we are unable to give a complete picture of the psycho-pathological phenomena of his life; but we learn

[39] There is some difference of opinion as to what he means about "having to do with women," *"misceor feminis."*

[40] *Ibid.*, p. 646.

from his own friends that his erratic conduct was frequently deplored by them. The Elector Frederick, Spalatin, Melancthon, and others found much to which they strenuously objected, especially with regard to his harsh and unbridled tongue. But criticisms only made him more wrathful; and, as the prophetic mood made him glow with fierce ardor, he used to reply that he did well to be angry when defending the vineyard of the Lord from the accursed antichrist, meaning thereby the Pope. He was never known to admit an error, as was natural in one who deemed himself an instrument of God.

That his mind was just as grandiose and megalomaniacal at the end of his life as at any other period, and even more so, is evident from the perusal of his will, an extract from which is here subjoined:

> I am known in Heaven, on earth, and in hell; and I am authority sufficient that my sole word may be relied on in this proceeding, since God of His paternal mercy entrusted to me, a guilty and miserable sinner, the Gospel of His Son, and has granted to me to be truthful and faithful therein, so that many in the world have received it through me, and have recognized me as a Doctor of the Truth in spite of the ban of the Pope, Emperors, Kings, Princes, and Priests, yea, in despite of the hatred of all the demons. Why will it not suffice, therefore, if in such a trifling matter as this present deposition, I affix the testimony of my hand, and it can be said, "Martin Luther, the Notary of God, and the Witness of His Gospel, wrote this."[41]

So now we have presented this brief sketch of Luther to our modern alienists, and we beg them to tell us whether or not this violent, irritable, intolerant, and egotistical man with his bad head, his alternate moods of deep melancholy and high exaltation, his unstable emotions, his undue rage at opposition, in a word, the appalling defects of a character which has no analogue in all history, was sane or insane?

But let us pass on. Long before the Reformation Luther had taken positive but unusual attitudes on some points of Christian doctrine, notably on the points of original sin, grace, justification by faith rather than by good works, and some others, as may be seen from a letter of his to Spalatin written in 1516. Like everyone else Luther had been charmed with the learning of Erasmus, and was proud of him as a fellow-monk. He had been a close reader of his books; but the *Praise of Folly,* or some passages in his other works which did not entirely smack of holiness, had led him to the conclusion that Erasmus lacked true spirituality, and he had become alarmed about the effect of such things on the young and unwary. In a leter to John Lange, a fellow monk at Erfurt, bearing date of March 1, 1517, and written consequently when he was still acting for Staupitz as vicar-general, with Tetzel unknown and the Reformation undreamed of, he writes his opinion of Erasmus:

> I am reading our Erasmus, and my esteem for him diminishes

[41] Quoted from Seckendorf, *op. cit.,* lib. iii, p. 651.

every day. It suits me indeed that he constantly and eruditely condemns both monks and priests for their inveterate and stupid ignorance; but yet I fear that he does not promote the cause of Christ or the grace of God, of which he is more ignorant than Faber Stapulensis. With him the purely human is of more account than what is divine. Though I am loath to judge him, I must admonish you not to read all his works, or, rather, not to accept them without exercising judgment. These are dangerous times, and I perceive that a man is not to be esteemed truly wise because he understands Greek and Hebrew, seeing that St. Jerome with his five languages did not match St. Augustine with his one, though to Erasmus it may seem far otherwise. But the opinion of one who attributes everything to the will of man is far different from that of one who recognizes nothing except grace.

Still I keep this opinion of him hidden lest I should confirm the verdict of those who criticize him; and perhaps the Lord in His own time will give him understanding.[42]

Here we have Luther in his capacity of vicar-general warning his brethren of Erfurt against the pernicious effects of Erasmus' writings; and, so far as we can judge, he never saw occasion to change his estimate. His remark about the peril of the times was truer than even he himself realized, and he recognized the tension in the atmosphere. The long-fought battle between Reuchlin and Hoogstraaten had left ineradicable traces of its injurious influence in the hearts of men, and Germany was hostile to the Roman Curia, even though the verdict had at last been given in Reuchlin's favor. While the contest was being waged, intense bitterness of feeling had arisen between the Reuchlinists and those who had opposed him, which had really split the learned men of Germany into two parties, both parties, however, being angry with the Roman court, the one because the verdict on the side of justice had been delayed for nine years, the other because the case had finally gone against them. The printing-press had now for nearly seventy years been turning out the results of thought, as well as food for further thought; and the spirit of revolt from the established and conventional had taken possession of many minds. This was the danger that Luther foresaw, that men's minds, when once loosened from their hold on the conventional and established, no matter how defective the latter might be, were exposed to the risk of being carried away on the current of change and doubt to the rocks and shoals of utter unbelief. How strange that the danger which he feared for his brethren from the writings of Erasmus was so soon to overtake himself! As great a thinker as Erasmus assuredly was, he failed to perceive that in weakening by his pen the respect and reverence which had previously been paid to monks, priests, bishops, and Popes, the ministers of the Church, he had weakened at the same time reverence and respect for the Church itself among those who, by lack of education or intelligence, were unable to discriminate. Each looked askance

[42] De Wette, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 52.

at his neighbor's actions, and men were ready to fight over straws. Let us cite as an example the case of John Wildenauer of Eger, better known as Egranus. A short time before Luther appeared on the scene, this priest in one of his sermons advanced the opinion that St. Anne had not married Cleophas after the death of Joachim, although his opinion was contrary to the accepted tradition. In the disturbed state of public opinion, this minor and totally unimportant question took on immense importance, learned professors of almost every university taking either one side or the other. He was vigorously assailed by the defenders of the tradition, and as vigorously maintained his position by an *Apologia* printed at Nuremburg in 1518. Then came Conrad Wimpina, professor of theology at Frankfurt-on-the-Oder, with a pamphlet against Wildenauer, to which the latter again replied with his *Responsio apologetica,* for which he received the praise of both Erasmus and Luther. We need not follow Wildenauer's further history, although it was a stormy one, during which he savagely attacked Luther's book *De seruo arbitrio,* of which work more anon. What we wish to point out by this incident is the readiness to quarrel over trifles which dominated the thinkers of that day, and to put the blame therefor, at least in part, on the shoulders of Erasmus.

Now it was just at this inauspicious period that Tetzel appeared near Wittemberg to interest the people in the Pope's *indulgence,* granted for the purpose of erecting the new basilica of St. Peter's at Rome. Perhaps no one man has been so much traduced and defamed as Tetzel. He has been called all sorts of vile names, accused of all kinds of crime, charged with adultery, peculation, drunkenness, and other immoralities; and these sins adduced against him in the heat of controversy, when men were shrieking denunciations on each other's heads, have clung to him ever since. It remained for modern times to do him justice; and German scholarship, with its usual thoroughness, has rescued his name from an undeserved obloquy.[43] As he has been so often called "an ignorant monk," let us examine the point for ourselves. He was born some time between 1450 and 1460 at Leipzig, and was educated at the famous university of his native city. In 1489 he entered the Dominican Order, was ordained priest, and soon made a reputation for himself as an eloquent and impressive pulpit orator. As a result, he was chosen to preach an *indulgence* for the Teutonic knights, who were undertaking an expedition against the Russian and Tartar hordes in order to stop their devastating raids and depredations on the defenseless German towns. This custom of raising money for laudable purposes was of long standing. The subject of *indulgences* is simple in itself, but has been misunderstood and misrepresented for many reasons, which it would take too long to enter into here. Moreover, in what we are about to say on the subject, we disclaim any special knowledge and only bring forward what any impartial book of reference has to say on the matter. The sacrament of penance consists of three parts—contrition, confession, and satisfaction, which are three obligations incumbent on each person

[43] See Paulus, *Johann Tetzel,* Mainz, 1899; Herman, *Johann Tetzel,* Frankfurt, 1882; Gröne, *Tetzel und Luther,* Soest, 1860.

who receives the sacrament. The first two carry on their face their obvious meaning, namely, that the penitent must be heartily sorry for his sins, which sorrow implies a firm purpose of amendment; and that there must be a relation of one's sins to the priest, who is the human representative of Christ. Satisfaction, the third part of the sacrament, is the part most misunderstood. In the olden days, various penances were given to the faithful as punishment for their sins, and consisted of good works in some form or other. This was *satisfaction* so called. For instance, it might take the form of a pilgrimage to some place hallowed by Our Savior, or a crusade against the infidels, or prayers in some particular church, or before some particular shrine, or an offering for some religious purpose such as church building, bridge building, or road building. The Popes only could grant a *plenary indulgence,* or at least reserved that right to themselves; but under certain circumstances they often imparted lesser rights to archbishops and bishops, to be employed however, only in their own dioceses. As illustrations we may recall that Pope John XXII in 1319 granted an *indulgence* of forty days to those who should aid in any way to build a bridge across the Elbe at Dresden. In 1484 the papal legate of Saxony obtained from Sixtus IV the privilege of granting an *indulgence* of forty days to all who should contribute to the restoration of a church destroyed by fire at Freiburg, and one of a hundred days to those who should do the same for another church in the same city. Innocent VIII in 1491 granted to the inhabitants of Saxony a *dispensation* from the quarterly fasts for a period of twenty years, on condition that each one would pay a twentieth part of a Roman florin annually towards building a bridge and chapel at Torgau, and the collegiate church at Freiburg. One fourth of the whole sum, however, was to go to Rome for the building of St. Peter's. Thus these substitutions of prayer, manual labor, fasting, or money, took the place of the former onerous methods of performing satisfaction. Not everyone could go to Jerusalem or Rome; not everyone could imitate the Emperor Theodosius bowing at the feet of St. Ambrose and begging the saint to put a period to his exclusion from the church; but it was in the power of every man or woman to make some little sacrifice of time, labor, or money, in order that thus satisfaction might be made. Of course the whole doctrine of *indulgences* rests upon the Catholic doctrine of Purgatory. The Church defines an *indulgence* as "a remission of the temporal punishment due to sin the guilt of which has been forgiven." Hence a *plenary indulgence* would be a remission of all the temporal punishment due to one's past sins, which would otherwise have to be satisfied in Purgatory; and an *indulgence* of a certain number of days would be the amount of purgatorial punishment to be undergone during such a period. Unless one really understands that the doctrine of Purgatory is based by the Church on the superabundant merits of Christ, he will never comprehend what the Catholic Church means by *indulgences.* They are not, and never were, permissions to commit sin; nor are they *satisfaction* for future sins. Both these charges have been made, and are still made by the uncandid; but a consultation with any educated Catholic, or a reference to any

Catholic book of doctrine, will show that such charges are entirely unfounded.

Now Tetzel had been entrusted with the mission of preaching an *indulgence* which Albert, the brilliant but worldly Archbishop of Mainz, had obtained from the Pope. Pastor, in his searching and impartial *History of the Popes,* says that this young Archbishop was heavily in debt, not, as both Protestant and Catholic historians relate, on account of having had to pay the Pope for his *pallium,* but because of a bribe which he paid to an agent in Rome whose name had not come down to us, for the purpose of buying off a rival, so that he [the Archbishop] might be able to enjoy a plurality of church offices.[44] Thus the Archbishop has laid himself open in the eyes of posterity to the charge of being a simoniacal ecclesiastic, though the Protestant historian Kalkoff[45] very generously maintains such a charge to be untenable. The Pope, as a result of all this, granted an indemnity to the Archbishop in the form of an *indulgence.*[46] The receipts were to be shared equally by the Pope and the Archbishop, in addition to a bonus of ten thousand gold ducats which was to accrue to the Pontiff, all of his share going to complete the new basilica of St. Peter's then under construction. We leave to theologians the morality of this transaction, and will adhere strictly to its historical aspect. The Archbishop sent Tetzel forth to preach the *indulgence* thus granted, and before long it attracted the attention of Luther, who was uncertain in his own mind of the dogma of *indulgences* as explained to the people by Tetzel. It was customary in those days in all university circles to send forth challenges to debate subjects which were properly within the limits of discussion; and, in accordance with this usage, Luther summoned each and all who cared to do so to meet him for the discussion pro and con of the matter of Tetzel's *indulgence.* This he did by drawing up a list of topics relating to the subject, which he was prepared to maintain against all disputants; and this list, which consisted of ninety-five theses, he nailed up in true university style on the doors of the Schlosskirche at Wittemberg. Since the doctrine of Purgatory, though constantly and consistently taught by the Church from the early centuries, had never been formally defined, and was not so defined until the Council of Trent, held after Luther's death, Luther was not actually heretical in bringing up this subject for discussion in connection with his attack on the *indulgence.* His theses were presented for the consideration of the learned only, were couched in his best Latin, and affirmed nothing, each thesis being put in the form of a query. No one seemed enough interested in the matter to debate with Luther, or else everyone considered that it was Tetzel's duty to take up the challenge, since it was especially against Tetzel's activity that Luther's opposition was directed. The day following the posting of the theses, Luther preached a sermon on *indulgences* in general, and this he had printed in German for the use of the common people. Then he set himself to state his own position on the subject more clearly, which he did in a

[44] See Pastor, *History of the Popes,* Vol. VII, p. 330. 1908.
[45] See his article in *Archiv für Reform. Geschichte,* Vol. I, p. 381.
[46] See Kaiveran, *Stud. und Kritik,* Vol. I, pp. 93, 140.

pamphlet entitled *Proofs or Solutions of the Theses.* He sent a copy of this pamphlet in manuscript to the Archbishop of Mainz, of whom we have just spoken as being most interested in the success of Tetzel's mission, and received a reply from the prelate desiring and entreating him to put off the publishing of this or any similar pamphlets on the same subject. For the present Luther obeyed. Tetzel, however, who, though undoubtedly a good man and a learned, was injudicious in his methods, was highly indignant when he learned what Luther had said and done against the work in which Tetzel was engaged. He assailed the Wittemberg monk from the pulpit with no mincing of words; and in his position of Inquisitor very unwisely had recourse to threats. There also entered into the matter some jealousy, for it was now the quarrel of an Augustinian against a Dominican; and this foolishly complicated the vexed affair. Tetzel wrote at once to the General of his Order at Rome, who appointed Sylvester Prierias, a monk of the same Order, who was then chief censor of books and held other important positions at the Roman court, to reply to Luther. This he did in a pamphlet entitled *A Dialogue on the Presumptuous Conclusions of Martin Luther.* There were bound to be exaggerations on both sides, and Prierias probably exalted the power of the Popes just as much as Luther sought to depreciate it. It was on an occasion when this pamphlet was under discussion among a party of Italian scholars that the alleged remark of Pope Leo was made which has been so often quoted since. Jortin, quoting from Bandello's *Tragical Histories,* gives us the original Italian, which we here put in English:

> At the beginning of the time when the Lutheran sect was commencing to sprout there was gathered together at midday in the home of our virtuous lord L. Scipio Attelano a party of gentlemen; and during a discussion of various matters, there were a few who blamed Pope Leo X not a little who in the beginning had not applied the remedy when Brother Sylvester Prierias, master of the Sacred Palace, showed him some heretical passages which Brother Martin Luther had scattered through the work which he had entitled *Indulgences,* because he [the Pope] had imprudently replied that Brother Martin had a very fine genius, and that these were monkish jealousies.[47]

That too much importance has been given to this alleged utterance of Leo is evident from another saying attributed to him, which, being less flattering to Luther, is rarely quoted: "A drunken German must have written these theses; as soon as he is sober, he will change his mind."

[47] See Jortin, *op. cit.* Vol. I, p. 117. " . . . rispose, che Fra Martino haveva un bellissimo ingegno, e che coteste erano invidie Fratesche." Jortin's translation of this passage is distinctly Jortinesque: "Brother Martin is a fine genius, and his enemies are little envious monks." Could that impeccable scholar have hastily concluded that *coteste,* by specious resemblance to the English *contest* and *contestant,* meant "enemies"? and have further made *invidie* adjective and *Fratesche* noun? Or was he only, as so often, translating to order? Leo meant, of course, that the matter was the usual squabble between two Orders, which remark, though injudicious before Prierias, was shrewd enough.

Meanwhile Tetzel himself was not idle, and, as he had been invited to the University of Frankfurt-on-the-Oder to receive the degree of D.D., he grasped this occasion to present his one hundred and six theses in answer to the ninety-five of Luther. This was a dignified procedure, much more so than was his burning of Luther's theses publicly later on, which only served to make the Wittemberg students retaliate on eight hundred copies of his own pamphlet which fell into their hands.

Then Johann Eck, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Ingolstadt, became involved in the discussion. No one questions the ability of this man, who had acquired an enviable reputation for unusual theological attainments, rare skill in argumentation, and a remarkable memory, qualities that even Luther cheerfully admitted. It appears that the Bishop of Eichstätt had requested the opinion of Eck on Luther's theses, and that Eck had given them a close investigation, finding therein eighteen which, in his estimation, had in them latent heresy, or violated Christian charity, or counseled resistance to ecclesiastical authority, or were frankly seditious. These eighteen theses, which he marked with obelisks [48] were sent to the Bishop in manuscript; but, by the act either of that prelate or of the friends of Eck, a copy of the manuscript reached Luther's hands and roused him to wrath. Eck hastened to explain that the publication of the thing was not brought about by any effort of his and very urgently, though very courteously, besought Luther not to cause scandal by resorting to any public disputation of these, some of which proper reflection would make him realize were unsound.[49] This only angered Luther the more, and he immediately issued a pamphlet in opposition to that of Eck, and entitled it *Asterisks*. But Carlstadt had anticipated him; for, while Luther was attending a conference of his Order at Wittemberg, Carlstadt had obtained a copy of Eck's manuscript, and had answered it before Luther's return. So ardent was the desire for controversy that Eck did not hesitate to bind himself to meet both Carlstadt and Luther in the same controversial arena at Leipzig, where he was to assail the points in the writings of each of these adversaries to which he objected. This meeting took place on June 27, 1519. On June 27th and 28th, and on the 1st and 3rd of July, he disputed with Carlstadt on divine grace and good works, and from July 4th he disputed for ten successive days with Luther on the absolute supremacy of the Pope, and on Penance and Purgatory. His contemporaries seem to have adjudged the victory in the debate to Eck, and he was hailed as the "Achilles of the Church."

[48] The printers' mark: †

[49] See *Reformationis acta,* Vol. II, pp. 164, 165. Leipzig, 1723. Also De Wette, *op. cit.,* Vol. I, p. 125.

CHAPTER VII

ERASMUS AND LUTHER

Now let us see what Erasmus was doing during these exciting times. Two things especially displeased him in the current of events: the tumult that was aroused by the quarrel between Tetzel and Luther, which was distasteful to him as a man of peace; and the resultant fact that public attention was being withdrawn from him and centred on others. His own quarrel with Faber Stapulensis was bringing him no fame but much anxiety. Altogether it was a most uncomfortable time, and he feared that the taste for learning might suffer as a result, even if he could bring himself to shut his eyes to the effect on him personally which these widespread religious disturbances might excite. Although he was in accord with Luther in his attack on the *indulgences,* he feared to be quoted to that effect, and only imparted this opinion to his most intimate friends, and then in the strictest confidence. To be quoted was the last thing that Erasmus desired; for with his natural lack of moral courage he feared the difficulties that such utterances, if quoted widely, might create for him. He knew that his name was now being coupled with Luther's, and that he was being credited with forging the weapons that Luther was using. At heart he was with Luther, but cared too much for his own personal interests to say so openly. Although himself deficient in moral courage, he could not help admiring it in the younger man; and at times he would even shake off his own selfish fears long enough to say a good word for Luther; then, immediately, as if dreading the results of his own imprudence, he would wrap himself up in a cloak of impenetrable silence. This was particularly exasperating to Luther and his friends, who sought the support and influence of Erasmus' name in the impending dangers. So he played fast and loose with them for several years, as we shall see, until at last Luther definitely classed him where he rightly belonged, namely, amongst his opponents. Until that occurred, Erasmus would say a good word when the occasion seemed propitious. Writing, in May, 1519, to Cardinal Wolsey, who, he feared, had been prejudiced against him by someone, he says:

> Luther is as unknown to me as the veriest stranger; nor have I yet had time to read more than one or two pages of the man's works. Not that I dislike them, but that my literary occupations have allowed me no leisure. And yet some people think that I have helped him in them. If he has written well, no praise is due me; if he has written badly, I ought not be blamed. . . .
>
> And even if I had the time to read him, I could not arrogate to myself the right to pass judgment on the writings of so great a man,

> even though now children everywhere, with the utmost temerity, pronounce this erroneous, that heretical. I was, indeed, rather poorly disposed to him some time ago, for fear lest some of this hatred should rebound upon good literature, which I was unwilling to see brought into further ill repute; for it has not escaped my attention how displeasing it would be were those things to be ruined from which such a rich harvest is garnered by priests and monks. First there appeared his many theses *On Pontifical Indulgences;* soon after there issued forth two works of his, *On Confession* and *On Penance;* and when I learned that certain people were intending to print them, I earnestly dissuaded them, lest they bring this further reproach on good literature. Even those who wish Luther well will bear me out in this. Finally a swarm of pamphlets appeared: no one saw me reading them; no one ever heard me either praising or censuring them. For I am not so rash as to praise what I have not read, nor so hypocritical as to condemn what I know nothing about, although nowadays that practice is common among people whom it least becomes.[1]

We feel compelled to express a doubt of the truth of his statement to Wolsey that he had not, save for perhaps a page or two, read Luther's pamphlet on *indulgences.* Such ingenuousness on his part is incredible, to put it very mildly. At a time when Luther was making the Church rock to its very foundations, and the hierarchy was looking on helpless and appalled, it is too much for Erasmus to expect us to believe that he alone of all men sat unmoved in the midst of this cataclysm of revolt, and that, while everyone was reading with bated breath the daring and iconoclastic utterances of the Wittemberg monk, he alone was not interested enough to read what the latter was asserting. But, as a matter of fact, we happen to know very well that he was not speaking the truth, for we have a letter from Capito to Luther which gives us an entirely different story: "To the recent expression of your affection I replied from Strassburg, adding at the same time the opinion Erasmus has of you, that is, how honorably and sincerely he admires your disputation on *indulgences.*" [2]

Here certainly Erasmus has impaled himself on the horns of a dilemma: for either he has not read Luther's work and yet praised it (which type of criticism he so pontifically inveighs against above); or he has read it yet denies so doing. Indeed, he seems to have made a stock phrase of his denial, for we find it elsewhere almost word for word with that to Wolsey, as when he later writes to the Archbishop of Mainz, whom he knew to be the head and front of all this trouble concerning *indulgences,* and who was in fact Tetzel's employer. Here is his denial to the Archbishop: "Luther is as unknown to me as the veriest stranger, nor have I yet had time to read his books beyond here and there a passage." [3]

And the date of his letter is more than two years after Luther had nailed up his theses on the church door at Wittemberg. The thing is

[1] Eras. Ep. 967, ll. 78-104. [2] See Jortin, *Life of Erasmus,* Vol. III, p. 48.
[3] Eras. Ep. 1033, ll. 38-40.

incredible at first sight; but those who have read this far will recognize it as the true Erasmian system for avoiding trouble.

When Luther posted his theses in the characteristically university manner, he turned the eyes of the whole world on himself; and among them those of his old counselor Staupitz. This knowing monk was well aware of Luther's ardent nature and his habit of exploding mentally when opposed. Hence he counseled moderation, and, though admitting that Tetzel's methods deserved reprobation, yet advised that everything calculated to give scandal to the innocent should be carefully avoided. Beyond this he does not seem to have exercised his authority over Luther, probably deeming that Tetzel deserved a lesson, and not dreaming that things would ever reach such a pass as they afterwards did. But very soon, yet when it was too late to avoid the consequences, he realized his error; and the scandal that he feared reached heights that neither he nor anyone else could then control. He readily perceived that Luther had taken the bit in his teeth and was running away, with nothing but his own zeal to guide him. He wrote a letter admonishing him to be more prudent and pointing out objectionable opinions, as we may gather from Luther's reply which we here subjoin:

> Father in the Lord. Occupied by many affairs I am compelled to write most briefly. I can well believe that my name stinks in the nostrils of many, since some good men lay it against me that I have condemned the rosary, the coronas, the little psalter, and such like prayers, nay, all sorts of good works. Thus also did it happen to St. Paul at the hands of those who used to declare that he said, "Let us do evil that good may come of it." I certainly have followed the theology of Tauler, and from his book, which you have recently given to be printed to our Aurifaber, I teach that men shall not trust in anything else but Christ Jesus alone, and not in prayers or merits, or even in their own works, because we shall be saved by a merciful God and not by any procurement of our own. From these words they suck the poison which you see to be spread abroad by them. But it was not for good or evil report that I began; nor will I cease for either the one or the other. God will have a care over me. These same people excite odium against me on account of the Scholastic Doctors, because I prefer the Mystics and the Bible to them, and they go almost insane in the excess of their zeal. I read the Scholastics with discernment, not with my eyes closed, as they do. Thus commanded the Apostle; "Prove all things, hold to what is good." I do not reject all that they wrote, nor do I approve all. But those talkative fellows are wont to make a whole from a part, a conflagration from a spark, an elephant from a fly. I with God care not at all for such phantoms. They are words, and words they will remain. If it is proper for Scotus, for Gabriel, and others to dissent from St. Thomas, or if it is permissible for the Thomists to contradict the entire world, or if, finally, there are almost as many sects among the Scholastics as there are persons, nay, as many as there are days in each person's life, why do they not allow me the

same freedom against them which they claim for themselves as against each other? But, if God takes up the work, there is none who may turn aside; if He sleeps, there is no one who may arouse Him. Farewell, and pray for me and for God's truth, wherever it may be.

Brother Martin Luther.

Wittemberg, March 31, 1518.[4]

But when Staupitz saw the storm approaching which Luther had invited, when he saw Prierias, and Eck, and a multitude of others, preparing to assail his recalcitrant younger brother, he begged him to submit his cause to the Pope himself, and this time Luther took his advice. His language to Staupitz on this occasion, and we shall quote it, seems that of a man who is filled with spiritual exaltation, who feels that he is possessed by the Holy Ghost and that Christ speaks through his mouth. He writes to Staupitz:

> I beg you, therefore, to the best of your power, to transmit to the Supreme Pontiff, Leo X, these my foolish trifles. . . . Christ will perceive whether what I have said is His or mine, without whose permission there is no word on the tongue of the Supreme Pontiff, nor courage in the arm of a king. He is the judge that I expect to speak from the See of Rome. . . . Sufficient for me is my sweet Redeemer and Propitiator, the Lord Jesus Christ, whose praises I will sing as long as I live. If any man be unwilling to sing with me, what care I? Let him howl by himself if he wishes.[5]

This is the spirit of emotion, of martyrdom, of heroism maybe, but possibly of fanaticism. At the same time he sent Staupitz his petition for presentation to the Pope, which is too long for insertion here, but may be consulted in De Wette. He asks the Holy Father to deign to hear him, a child and untutored. He gives the Pope an account of the origin of his troubles, about the coming of Tetzel and his reprehensible methods of preaching the *jubilee indulgence.* He told how the friends of Tetzel had recourse to threats of accusing him of heresy, and of calling on his Holiness to brand him as a heretic. He related the story of his posting his theses, wherein he invited the theologians to discuss with him the entire matter of *indulgences,* as he had a right to do under his diploma of Doctor of Theology, a right granted to the doctors of his University by the Pope himself. He asks the Pontiff what course he must now pursue, since he cannot recall his theses without stultifying himself. He explains why he had caused his controversial works to be printed as a measure of security against being wrongly quoted; and goes on to say that he has placed them under the protection of his Holiness, so that all who desire may know how sincerely and candidly he had sought out and observed the reverence due to the power and dignity of the Church, and how wickedly his adversaries had maligned him. Had he been such a one as his enemies declared him to be, it would not have been possible that his own king, Frederick of Saxony, would have

[4] De Wette, *op. cit.,* Vol. I, p. 102. [5] *Ibid.,* Vol. I, p. 118.

allowed him to teach in his University of Wittemberg, being a sovereign of the greatest integrity and a most ardent lover of catholic and apostolic truth. And then he concludes in these words:

> Wherefore, most Holy Father, I throw myself prostrate at your feet, with all that I have and am. Give me life or death, invite or repel me, approve or reprove me as you will. I recognize your voice as the voice of Christ residing and speaking in you. If I have merited death, I will not refuse it. The earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof, and blessed is He forever. May He preserve you eternally, Amen.
>
> Brother Martin Luther, Augustinian, May 30, 1518.[6]

At this critical period Luther was deprived of the invaluable advice of Staupitz, who was then engaged in traveling from place to place on the business of the Order. He was the only man who seemed to have the power to sway Luther, or which approbation the latter made the slightest effort to win. Spalatin was a dear friend, it is true, but he only followed where Luther led. Melancthon was but a youth of twenty-one, precocious of a surety, since at seventeen he had written the preface to the *Epistolae clarorum virorum,* and a scholar to his finger-tips but, when we remember how much older Luther was than he, we are not surprised that he assumed the leadership over Melancthon, even at their first meeting, and kept it as long as he lived. Mastery of the minds of others was the dominant characteristic of Luther, but no man ever controlled his. Even in the case of Staupitz his kindly influence over Luther was due to the old associations that existed between them in the monastery at Erfurt, and we shall see that even this was not permanent. As for any influence that Erasmus might have wielded over him, we are bound to regard it as negligible, for reasons that we shall soon set forth. Luther's quarrel with Rome was not entirely displeasing to Erasmus, and he was filled with inward mirth at seeing the mighty Roman Curia thrown into tumult by the fearless Saxon monk. He would have patted him on the back if he could have done so with due regard to his own safety and interests. Writing to Luther's friend John Lange, he expresses his deep affection for Staupitz, and then goes on to speak about Luther as follows:

> I understand that Luther is approved by the best sort of people, but they say that there is a difference between himself and his writings. His *Conclusions* pleased everybody, except some who were unwilling to see Purgatory wrested from their hands as being their bread and butter. I have seen Prierias' most insipid reply. I perceive the rule of the Roman bishop, as that See is now constituted, to be the pest of Christianity, and the Dominicans flatter it brazenly in every possible way. But I know not if it be advisable to touch that ulcer openly. That is a business for kings; but I fear that even they are in collusion with the Pope for sake of a share of the booty. . . . Louvain, October 17, 1518.[7]

[6] *Ibid.,* Vol. I, p. 119.

[7] Eras. Ep. 872.

And again writing to Lange in the following May, he says:

> The papal party are exceedingly furious here for some time past, and are at length united in their purpose of attack; but at present they are somewhat calmed down, and I am in hopes that they will soon be ashamed of their frenzy. The better sort like the freedom of Luther, who will be prudent enough, I make no doubt, to see that the matter does not degenerate into division and dissension. I feel that we should strive to instill Christ into the minds of men rather than to fight with pretended Christians, from whom no glory or victory will be gained except by the doing away with the tyranny of the Roman See and its satellites the Dominicans, the Carmelites, and the Franciscans—I speak of the unworthy ones only. I do not feel that this can be attempted without grave disorder. Farewell, dear father, to whose kindness I am not unaware how much I owe. Louvain, May 30, 1519.[8]

This was the real attitude of Erasmus towards Luther at this time—a desire to see him administer a thorough house-cleaning to the Roman court in order to cleanse and purify it from the worldliness and corruption which had taken possession of it, but to stop short of anything which might lead to a division in Church unity. Incidentally, his *bête noire,* the monks, were to be driven out from their strong intrenchments, a herculean task, as he well knew. It is of interest to note that while he was thus talking of abolishing the tyranny of the papal court, he was making assiduous use of all his influential friends at Rome to obtain the commendation of Pope Leo for his forthcoming second edition of the *New Testament.* None knew any better than he how to put the machinery of the Curia in motion for this purpose; and he never deemed it inconsistent to accept from a man he hated a favor of this kind. But his hatred for Leo was a mild, academic sort of hatred, so to speak, and was never to be permitted to interfere with his own personal interests. We may remember that, while he was subjecting Pope Julius II to all kinds of indignities in the *Praise of Folly,* he had just been made the recipient at that Pope's hands of a great favor. Consistency apparently was not one of his strong points.

In a letter to the Elector Frederick of Saxony, Luther's sovereign and protector, he says a good word for the much accused monk, reminding Frederick that it is his privilege to protect the innocent. Then he says:

> Pope Leo has the same desire, for nothing is dearer to his heart than that innocence shall be protected. He is delighted to be called "Father," nor does he love those who practise tyranny in his name. No one better fulfills the Pope's intention than he who maintains justice in the highest degree.[9]

And yet almost in the same breath he had told Lange that "the rule of Leo is the pest of Christianity, and that there will be no glory in

[8] *Ibid.,* 983.

[9] *Ibid.,* 939, ll. 122-6.

victory until the tyranny of the Roman See and its satellites is done away with." He was all things to all men, and reminds one of Milton's passage:

> But all was false and hollow, though his tongue
> Dropped manna, and could make the worst appear
> The better reason, to perplex and dash
> Maturest counsels. (*Paradise Lost,* Book II, line 112.)

Thus Erasmus kept inciting Luther by little bits of praise and commendation, which were unquestionably very grateful to the younger man. Luther speaks with evident pleasure of a letter which he had received from a friend in France, in which Erasmus was quoted as saying: "I fear Martin will be the victim of his own uprightness." [10]

This continued praise of himself aroused in Luther a desire to be on more intimate terms with Erasmus, deeming that his friendship was worth cultivating. Melancthon, writing to Erasmus on January 5, 1519, informs him that "Martin Luther, most devoted to your fame, desires to merit your approval in every way." [11]

But much as he rejoiced at Luther's proceedings, it is evident that he did not regard either More or Colet as likely to view the matter of setting the authority of the Church, or of Pope Leo, if one prefers, at defiance. The first allusion to Luther that he made to More occurs in a letter dated March 5, 1518, in which he states that he is sending him some pamphlets. One of these we observe to be Luther's *Conclusions,* which had now been in print about four months. But he accompanied it with no word of either praise or censure. He wrote on the same day to Colet without making the slightest reference to the matter that was setting Europe in an uproar. Why he chose to keep silent on it is obscure, but it is possibly due to his usual custom of seeing how the wind was blowing before committing himself to a position which might afterwards prove untenable. This noncommittal attitude he maintained for a long time, until Luther, who never permitted himself to remain long in doubt as to the feelings of his contemporaries, wrote to him, determined to ascertain once for all where Erasmus stood:

> Martin Luther to Erasmus of Rotterdam, Greeting.
>
> Many times have I spoken with you and you with me, Erasmus, our glory and our hope, and as yet we are not mutually acquainted. Is not this a marvel, or rather instead of a marvel, is it not an everyday occurrence? For who is there whose entire inmost thoughts are not dominated by Erasmus, who is not instructed and controlled by Erasmus? Of course I speak of those who esteem literature rightly. And I derive much satisfaction from the fact that, among the other gifts with which Christ has endowed you, this also is to be counted, namely, that you displease many; and hence I am wont to argue that we may thus discern the gifts of a loving from those of an angry God. Therefore I congratulate you because, while you

[10] De Wette, *Luthers Briefe, Sendschreiben, und Bedenken,* Vol. I, p. 341.
[11] Eras. Ep. 910.

please all good men in the highest degree, you none the less displease those who desire to be the only great ones, and who have an excessive wish to please.

But how foolish am I who approach such a man as you are with my hands unwashed, and without any reverent and decorous preface, as if I were one of your most familiar acquaintances, when in reality I am speaking as one stranger to another. But out of your kindness you will attribute this either to my love for you, or my inexperience, since, having spent my days among the sophists, I have not learned how to write to a really learned man. Otherwise with how many letters already should I have wearied you! Nor would I have permitted it that you should always converse with me by letter only.

Now, since I have learned from that most worthy man Fabricius Capito that my name was known to you through those trifles of mine on *indulgences,* and from your most recent preface to the *Enchiridion* that my essays have not only been seen but also accepted by you, I am compelled to acknowledge, even by this most uncouth letter, that wondrous spirit of yours, which enriches my mind and the minds of all; although I am aware that you will hold it of the very slightest moment that I thus in a letter show you that I am loving and grateful, since you are amply content that my mind shall glow in your regard gratefully and affectionately, but privily and before God, just as we deem it sufficient to glean your thoughts and your good offices from your books without your being aware of it, and without either letter or personal speech from you. Neither my modesty nor my conscience will suffer me not to express my gratitude to you even in words, especially since my own name has ceased to be obscure, lest my silence might be deemed malevolent by someone, or be thought to augur disastrously for the future. And so, dear Erasmus, amiable man that you are, recognize me if you see fit as your little brother in Christ, one who is truly most devoted and attached to you, but meriting by his ignorance nothing more than to be buried in a corner, and to be unacquainted with the same sun and sky as you, a thing which with no tardy longing I have desired, since I am fittingly conscious of my poor powers. But I know not by what mischance things have fallen out to the contrary, and I am compelled to my deep shame to have my ignominies and my unfortunate ignorance exposed and paraded even before learned men.

Philip Melancthon is doing finely, except that our combined efforts hardly suffice to keep him from destroying his health in his excessive craze for literature. He burns with the fervor of youth to be all and to do all for everybody. You will be doing a kindness if you admonish him to save himself for us and good literature, for with him safe and sound I know nothing from which we shall derive greater hope. Father Andreas Carlstadt wishes to be remembered to you, venerating Christ in you. May the Lord Jesus preserve you for all eternity, dearest Erasmus. Amen.

I have been verbose, but you will consider that it does not behoove you to be ever reading learned epistles; at times you must become weak with the weak. Brother Martin Luther.

Wittemberg, March 28, 1519.[12]

Here we have Luther's direct appeal for the countenance of Erasmus, an appeal which must have gone straight home if the latter at all recognized Luther as one of the converts to the ideas which he had himself been propagating. But he must perpend, for by his impetuosity Luther might embroil him with Rome, not to mention Archbishop Warham and the other English bishops whom he knew to be in close attachment to the Holy See. On the other hand, he had learned that Luther was being protected against the Roman Curia by his monarch the Elector of Saxony, who, by his office as one of the electors of the Empire, was of supreme importance at that particular period, when an emperor might have to be elected at any moment in the event of the death of the old Emperor, Maximilian. On learning of his efforts to defend Luther from the various Church officials who desired to discipline him, Erasmus conceived it might be good for himself to win the Elector's favor; so he hastened to dedicate to him an edition of *Suetonius* which he was just then issuing. The Elector responded to this courtesy very graciously, and sent him a medal with his profile impressed thereon, whereupon Erasmus concluded that it would be safe for him to say that, while he did not know his client Luther personally, nor even yet by his writings, what he had heard of him was entirely to his credit, and that everyone conceded he was a worthy man; but it was not for him to praise or dispraise Luther's writings, since he had not read them sufficiently to be able to form a proper judgment. This was safe ground to take at all events. He went on to say that it did not do any good to call Luther a heretic, since that would only incite the mob to throw stones at him without proving anything. Moreover, not every error is a heresy at once, nor is a thing heretical which happens to displease this one or that one. And so he goes on relating self-evident propositions, which afforded him safe ground, gave a few crumbs of comfort to Luther, but committed him to nothing definite.[13] Then he proceeded to answer Luther's letter as follows:

Erasmus of Rotterdam to Father Martin Luther, Greeting.

Dearest brother in Christ. Your letter was most pleasing to me, showing as it does the keenness of your mind and your Christian spirit. I can hardly tell you in words what commotion your writings have occasioned here. So far, I have been unable to pluck that most unfounded suspicion from the minds of some that your works have been written with my assistance, and that I am the ringleader of your faction, as they style it. They deemed this a good excuse for stifling good literature which they regard with a deadly hatred as something which might detract from the majesty of theology, for of this they make more account than they do of Christ, and at the same time make it an opportunity to assail me whom they regard as

[12] *Ibid.*, 933. [13] *Ibid.*, 939.

influential in advancing the cause of learning. The whole movement is carried on by clamor, brazenness, trickery, detraction, and calumny, so that had I myself not seen it, nay, felt it myself, I should never have believed anyone who said theologians could become so insane. You might say that it was a deadly pestilence. And yet this poisonous thing, though springing from a few, has crept into many, so that a great part of this crowded University is infected with the malady.

I have asserted that you are the veriest stranger to me, that I have not yet read your books, and that as a consequence I have neither censured nor approved anything that may be in them. I have only advised some not to be so spitefully vehement in public about books which they have not read, but to leave the decision to those whose judgment is of the most value. And I have warned them to reflect whether it was expedient to bring before promiscuous assemblies such matters as these which could be better refuted in books or discussed among scholars, especially when with unanimous consent the author's personal character was commended. But it was all to no purpose, for up to the present they rant and rave with their one-sided and notorious disputes. How often has peace been agreed upon between us! How often have they on the most groundless suspicion excited fresh disturbances! And they think they are theologians. Those who are attached to the court here hate these theologians, and that is blamed upon me. All the bishops are well disposed towards me. They [the theologians] place no trust in books; their only hope of victory lies in their calumnies, which I disregard, relying on the consciousness of my own rectitude. Towards you they are becoming a little milder. They fear my pen, a fact which is indicative of their evil consciences, for I would certainly paint them in their native hues, and serve them right, did not the teaching and example of Christ restrain me. Wild beasts are made gentle by kindness; these men are rendered savage by good deeds.

There are those in England who think highly of your writings, men of the highest rank. There are some here too who favor you, among them being the Bishop of Liége. As for me, I keep myself uncompromised, to what extent I can, in order the better to help the revival of learning. And it seems to me that more is to be gained by such courteous restraint than by violence. It was thus that Christ brought the world to His sway. It was thus that Paul abrogated the Jewish law by drawing out all things unto allegory. It is more expedient to inveigh against those who abuse the Pope's authority than against the Popes themselves, and I hold the same opinion with regard to kings. The Schools are not so much to be despised as recalled to sensible studies. Of beliefs which are too well accepted to be abruptly torn from the people's minds, it is better to use in debate reasons which are strong and convincing rather than to make dogmatic affirmations. It is better to disregard the violent contentions of some people than to refute them. We must everywhere be

careful not to say or do anything tending to arrogance or partisanship, for that I deem acceptable to the spirit of Christ. Meanwhile we must guard our minds from being corrupted by anger, hatred, or vainglory, for such defects are wont to lie hidden in the very heart of piety. I do not however admonish you to do these things, but advise you to do always what you are doing.

I have turned over a few pages of your *Commentaries on the Psalms;* they please me exceedingly, and I trust they will prove very useful. There is at Antwerp a Prior of his monastery, a truly Christian man, who loves you greatly. He says that he was once a pupil of yours. He is almost the only one of them all who preaches Christ; the others preaching about the public gossip, or what makes for their own private gain. I have written to Melancthon. May the Lord Jesus give you every day more and more of His spirit, to His own glory and the public good. When I was writing this, your letter was not at hand. Farewell. Louvain, May 30, 1519.[14]

His letter to Melancthon mentioned above was couched in similar terms, stating that everyone approved Luther's personal character, but differed about his sentiments. It also repeated the now threadbare story that he had not read Luther's writings, and immediately shows by the context that he had read them, for he goes on to say that Luther "has given good advice, but would that he had given it with as much dexterity as boldness!" [15] How could be pass judgment on them if he had not read them?

Emerton has summed up Erasmus' present attitude towards Luther, as manifested in this letter to him quoted above, in a few apt and compelling sentences, which we shall take the liberty of reproducing here:

> We have omitted a string of commonplaces about moderation and gentleness, which must have helped to make this letter rather cold comfort to Luther. If it meant anything to him, it meant that Erasmus really agreed with his views on indulgences and the state of the Church in general, but was already dreading the effect of putting these views boldly and clearly before the world. What Luther wanted in the spring of 1519 was not pious exhortations to keep his temper, but a grip of the hand and a frank word of approval. Whether Erasmus was going to have a bad time with the men of darkness at Louvain could not interest him. The question was: woud Erasmus stand by him,—yes or no? and so far the answer was not encouraging. To one who knew the kind of language Erasmus was wont to apply to his opponents, it must have seemed grotesquely out of place for him to exhort Luther to gentleness of speech.[16]

Emerton adds that here his [Erasmus'] own personality comes in, that he is completely absorbed in the effect that Luther's action may have upon himself, and that he becomes the central point in his own field of vision. But let us here ask, was not this his constant attitude in every

[14] *Ibid.*, 980. [15] *Ibid.*, 947. [16] *Erasmus*, p. 297.

critical period of his life as far as we have traced his career? He well knew that this letter of his to Luther would be printed and closely scanned by friend and foe, and that though written for Luther it would go the rounds of an ever-increasing circle. So he perceived that he must be on his guard. What was Luther to him? Personal safety and interest first, last, and all the time. But he would give him advice, for it would look well and sound well to assume the rôle of mentor to the younger man, who had already obtained the reputation of rashness. But Luther was just as keen as himself, and easily perceived that little in the way of support was to be expected from the great man. Erasmus had not deluded him for a moment, and he decided once and for all to build no hopes on him. He ceased to correspond with him, and does not seem to have included him any longer in his scheme of things. On his own side, Erasmus felt that it was high time for him to learn caution and not to multiply his critics unnecessarily.

It was just at this time that he was being assailed by Lee, and considerable heat had been developed on both sides. Then, too, Faber Stapulensis had not yet relented, and he lived in daily expectation of being attacked by this really able divine. Last but not least, by any means, James Masson, or Latomus, as he is usually called, was to be reckoned with. This man was one of the ablest of the theological faculty of Louvain University, and an adversary whom Erasmus himself admitted to be formidable. He had just written a work which represented the opinions of the very conservative element of the divines, the gist of which was that little good was to be derived from tracing the origins of the Bible, as it then existed, back to their earliest lingual components. It only served, he thought, to weaken faith in the authority of the Sacred Text. Erasmus had published a book called *A Method of True Theology,* in which he maintained the opposite opinion. In fact, he expressly states in the book that "It is impossible for you to understand the Scriptures unless you know the language in which they were written." [17] Latomus denied this, distinguishing however in his denial that, while it was true scientifically and in a narrow sense, it was false in the broader sense that no one could satisfactorily study theology unless he were skilled in the three tongues mentioned. As Erasmus had stated the contrary in his annotations to the *New Testament,* he was forced to stand by his guns, and the battle was on. It split the faculty of the University into two camps, wherein erudition, dialectics, and all the rhetorical aids to learned debate were put into play by both sides. Latomus was a foeman worthy of Erasmus' steel, as the latter freely acknowledged. He had studied in the University of Paris, and had then succeeded John Standonck in his position of Rector of the Domus Pauperum, which was an integral part of the University. He was invited to a seat at the council board of the University of Louvain, and was eventually admitted to the doctorate of theology, and still later was made university professor of the same. They being fellow-members of the same faculty, it is obvious that Erasmus could not have recourse to his usual weapons of ridicule, aspersion, and cutting wit. Lee and

[17] See LB, Vol. V, col. 78.

Faber were far away, but Latomus and himself met daily. Different tactics must be employed, for he begins to recognize that at times he has been unnecessarily harsh. Writing about this time to Bishop John Fisher, he naïvely admits this fault when he says: "It has certainly happened to me that at times when I imagined I was indulging in the purest flattery, there were people who would consider me cutting." [18]

Bishop Fisher himself had taken issue with Faber Stapulensis on a matter which need not concern us here further than to state that it furnished opportunity to Erasmus for an exquisite bit of flattery. He tells the bishop that he envies Faber such an adversary, and that no matter how complete is his overthrow Faber must remember that "he falls at the hand of the great Aeneas." [19] Then he proceeds to tell the Bishop about his troubles with Latomus:

> James Latomus, a theologian of Louvain, has issued a work in which, while he does not condemn the languages entirely, he so treats his subject as to attribute as little importance to them as possible. Then he opposes various precepts to the precepts of my *Method of True Theology,* but without mentioning my name, although he covers me with a heavier odium when the unwary reader deems that everything is aimed at me which he is directing at this or that man, or even against Luther himself. Our theologians have commented on this calculated moderation of his. His book certainly pleased me on many accounts; and would that they would write to a surfeit, but cease to calumniate me! Now by various kinds of trickery I am so belied by many, that I am not certain against whom I should draw my sword. I had decided not to reply to the work at all, but the opinions of my friends overswayed me, although I have replied in such a way that it seems not to be a "reply" at all.
>
> But what condign imprecations shall I call down upon those evil tongues who have whispered in your ear that Erasmus was not well disposed towards you? Oh, it is not among the number of those to whom I am well disposed only that I place you, but rather among the number of those whom I reverence and venerate in every way, placing you with them in an especial manner as my most eminent preceptor and my most constant friend. That mention is very rarely made of you in my letters is due to no other cause than the reverence due your lordship, since in so many ways you impress me with your supremacy—on the one hand by your episcopal dignity, and on the other by your singularly admirable erudition, but particularly by the sanctity of your character, wherein you and a few others bring back to our minds the early bishops of the Church. I can make more free with others, but you have ever seemed to me one who must be named with religious veneration, especially in the books which I have published. But I have dared to make mention of you in several passages of my works, but more particularly in the last edition of my *Enchiridion,* in the translation I long ago made of a fragment of Basil which I have added to the work. Meanwhile I

[18] Eras. Ep. 936, ll. 16-18.

[19] Vergil, *Aeneid, Book X,* v. 830.

am on the lookout for some work or other which I may confidently expect to survive me, and which shall not be unworthy of your rank and greatness. This shall be dedicated to you in an especial manner, that is, it shall be commended to the whole world under your name.

As for the movement on foot among you for the reforming of the clergy, as they phrase it, I fear lest they may imitate too closely the example of the doctors, who first evacuate the body which they have undertaken to cure. Would that Christ, awakened at last, might free His people from so manifold a tyranny, which, if it be not guarded against, will reach such a pitch, that it will be more easy to suffer the tyranny of the Turks!

He ends up this long letter to the Bishop with a very human and enlightening touch. It seems that Fisher had tried to restore the broken friendship between Lee and Erasmus, as was characteristic of the saintly old man, and had induced Lee to extend the olive branch. But Erasmus would none of it, and shows his evident bitterness against Lee with anything but a magnanimous or charitable spirit:

> Just as I was about to seal this up, he of whom I spoke earlier, moved, as I conjecture, by your fascinating letter, sent a messenger to me at Antwerp to arrange with me for a restoration of our friendship. I replied that, if he could give me back my loss of reputation, I would readily return to my former intimacy with him. Though I am of that Christian spirit that not even when myself wounded would I wish to wound anyone else; still I am not so facile as to trust immediately in a man who has such a disposition as his. Nay, he was never a friend who ceased to be a friend in the manner he did. Of Luther I will write more fully at another time. Farewell, your lordship, whose commendation I most desire. Antwerp, April 2, 1519.[20]

Writing to Martin Lipsius about a month afterwards, he no longer emphasizes his Christian spirit, but assails Lee with the utmost virulence:

> Lee is dealing with you like a wolf with a lamb. So far am I from expostulating with him that, as a matter of fact, I have not seen him for several months. But oh, that you had not given him the rest of those letters! You could have made some excuse or other. Be crafty on your part, for he shall find nothing out from me, since I would rather trust an evil demon. It was only the better to deceive you that he wrote you that friendly letter, etc.[21]

But let us pass on to things of greater moment. As often as he could lift his attention from his own little troubles and private animosities to cast a glance around him, he perceived that Martin Luther was continuing to occupy the attention, not only of the ecclesiastical, but also of the learned, world to a disquieting extent. The result was a little pique on his part, one instance of which was manifested in his resenting the

[20] Eras. Ep. 936.

[21] *Ibid.*, 960.

publication of Luther's works by Froben and his measures to prevent it. Luther, as we have noted, had ceased to build any further hopes on gaining moral help or encouragement from Erasmus; but not so Luther's friends. Most of these were more scholarly than Luther and were dazzled by the splendor of Erasmus; but Luther from this time on left the matter of propitiating the great scholar to others. For himself, he had not the time or the desire to wait upon the great man's approval, and was rather disposed to look upon him as somewhat of a humbug. That there was not a definite breach between them at this time was certainly due to the tact and prudence of their mutual friends. One of these was Wolfgang Capito, of whom we have made previous mention. He was one of the Basle circle of humanistic scholars, and seemed to be eager that no rupture should occur between the two men for whom he entertained high admiration. With this idea in view he hastened to write to Erasmus:

> Do not publicly disparage Martin's undertaking, I beg of you. You know what value lies in your good opinion. I am speaking sincerely. It is expedient that Luther's reputation be maintained. Courage will be given to the rest of our young men to dare something for the freedom of Christ, for I see much to be desired in this regard. See to it that Louvain does not oppose him. We will hold Germany and Saxony well disposed towards you, where there is a powerful king who is the patron of Luther, besides a most flourishing university at Wittemberg, and many illustrious personages who admire Erasmus and Luther equally. There is nothing his enemies more desire than to see you angry with him. He and his friends are most devoted to you. It is better for us all to have the theologians hostile than favorable to him. There are, however, some kings, cardinals, bishops, and most eminent ecclesiastics, who have his affair much at heart. Basle, April 8, 1519.[22]

At about this time, he turned once more to his English friends, and we find letters written by him to Richard Pace, who was now secretary to Henry VIII, to Lord Mountjoy, to Sir Henry Guildford, the king's Comptroller, to Cardinal Wolsey, to Bishop Foxe of Winchester and Bishop Ruthall of Durham, as also to John Claymond, Master of Corpus Christi at Oxford, a very wealthy ecclesiastic and true friend of literary men. We have seen that he had often had the opportunity to attach himself to courts, notably the Imperial, the French, and the English courts; but it is greatly to his credit that he consistently refused to be a hanger-on in any royal palace. He wanted absolute freedom of action, and would never be satisfied with anything short of this. He had no insuperable objection to

> crook the pregnant hinges of the knee,
> Where thrift may follow fawning,

but he preferred to do so by letter and with the least possible loss of time. Pace had told him that the king was well disposed to aid him if

[22] *Ibid.*, 938.

he would again come over to England, and Erasmus had replied that it was a real pleasure to be praised by such a king, although he was not avid of such. But he immediately sat down and wrote to the king a long and erudite epistle, in which he praised Henry's efforts for peace, his desire to improve the condition of his people, his willingness to obey his own laws, his example as a chaste and gentle husband,[23] and the learned splendor of his court. And then he continues:

> Now, when I reflect on what a king and ruler, what a queen, what nobility, what councilors, and what officials, the English court possesses, my mind urges me to join such a court at no matter what cost to myself. Nor should I regret to gratify my ambition in this way, were it not that my infirm health, which grows worse with my advancing years, dissuades me from it.[24]

Then he passes on to descant on the distinguished endowments of body and mind which the king possesses, his love of literature, his ability in disputation on philosophical and theological subjects, and, notwithstanding all this, his urbanity of manner and easiness of access, rendering him the most delightful of monarchs. Then he adds that he hopes the king will not be too much annoyed by the mentioning of all these things, but his ardent desire to congratulate him on them must be his excuse; ending finally with the request that the king will deign to number him among the many illustrious men who frequent his court, and whose genius is nurtured and cherished by him.

Similarly, after a long silence, he writes to his old patron Lord Mountjoy, probably on the same day, telling him that, though he had often congratulated him on the number of distinguished scholars that England was producing, now he was more inclined to envy that fortunate country, so much were her literati throwing those of the rest of Europe in the shade. He comments on the flourishing condition of her two Universities of Oxford and Cambridge, taking occasion to praise Fisher, Foxe, and Wolsey for their share in this advancement of learning. But it is especially to the king that he attributes the credit for all this, since it was due to his efforts that peace was restored to the kingdom. The result is that bad laws are abrogated and good ones are put into force, while learning flourishes as never before. The king is both the cause and the inspiration of this progress, and sets a shining example by putting his wise plans into execution personally. Then he adds:

> No living being is dearer to me than yourself; and yet I almost envy your lordship because you are enjoying such good things without the companionship of me your quondam associate, who used to share both your pleasures and your pains. But what is harder still, while you are happy in so many respects, I am compelled to wage conflicts with the most abominable—not men, but—monsters, against whom, by the gods, I would try what a tongue-thrashing would do, did not Christian moderation, like Pallas in the *Iliad,* seizing

[23] "Quae ciuium domus casti concordisque coniugii tam euidens habet exemplum." (*Ibid.*, 964, l. 70.)

[24] *Ibid.*, 964, ll. 95-100.

me by the hair, recall me to myself just as I was drawing my sword.[25]

In another letter written on the same day to Sir Henry Guildford, who was at this period King Henry's confidant and bosom friend, he lauds the king even more, not without the hope, we may be allowed to believe, that his sentiments would reach the king's ears. He apostrophizes him thus:

> Oh, marvelous vicissitudes of human affairs! Formerly the ardor for learning was almost entirely confined to the Religious Orders; now, since they have given themselves up to their stomachs, to luxury, and to money-getting, the love for learning is migrating to worldly princes and court nobility. For what university, what monastery, ever possessed so many persons endowed with eminent probity and learning as your court now holds? Are we clerics not most rightly ashamed of ourselves? The feasts of the priests and theologians are flowing with wine, they are replete with scurrilous jests, they are clamorous with drunken tumult, they abound in virulent detraction; while at the tables of kings they modestly dispute about the things which make for erudition and piety. It is not to be wondered at that all hasten to follow the example of this best of kings, whose gifts which he has in common with other kings, surpassing many, inferior to none, I pass over. But who is there more dexterous in debate than he, who happier in invention, sounder in judgment, apter in expression?
>
> Formerly, captivated by the attractiveness of literary leisure, I shrank from the courts of kings; but to such a court as that of yours I would not hesitate to cast my lot with all my belongings, which consist of writing paper mostly, did not my poor health and impending age dissuade me. Where now are they who boast that the possession of learning diminishes the vigor of kings? Who is more able in war, more prudent in maintaining the law, more circumspect in council, more vigilant in repressing crime and license, more diligent in the selection of magistrates and officials, more energetic in bringing about treaties between monarchs than Henry VIII? Truly I see that something of a golden age is about to arise, which perchance I may not live to enjoy, since I am approaching the end of my tale; but I congratulate the world thereon, and I congratulate the young men in whose memories Erasmus will somehow survive by reason of his services to them.[26]

As we have to discount considerably Erasmus' language when praising the personal chastity and conjugal fidelity of King Henry, so too we are moved to hesitate about accepting his estimate of the table conversation of the court officials on the one hand, and the clergy on the other. The picture of the priests overcome with wine, and bandying ribald jests, forms such a striking antithesis to his other picture of the abstemious and temperate Henry discoursing on pious topics with his courtiers

[25] Eras. Ep. 965 *ad fin.* Cf. *Iliad,* I, 193 *sqq.* [26] Eras. Ep. 966.

that we who have read stories of that amorous king are forced to the conclusion that either Erasmus was woefully misinformed about the personal habits of the king, or the historians of the time have conspired to defame that royal Tudor. It is fortunate for us that Erasmus never tried to write history, since his personal likes and dislikes would have always served to distort the facts.

He did not trust alone to this appeal to Henry, but also wrote a very direct and adjuring letter to Wolsey, Henry's *alter ego,* in which he seeks to set himself right with the Cardinal as regards his relations with Luther, and then goes on to tell him how much England is indebted to his Eminence for the freedom from crime which it enjoys, as also for his fostering care of literature. Since we have already quoted parts of this letter, which had the same object in view as that to Henry himself, we need not trouble the reader further with it. We may, however, sum up the result of his various appeals to his English friends by saying that, although they appreciated his learning and literary ability, there was no longer any individual or concerted action in the direction of securing him permanently for England. In this year of 1519 England was entirely and solidly Catholic, and had not the slightest quarrel, or desire for a quarrel, with Rome. We may go further and say that there was not any of the strong anti-Roman, or anti-papal feeling, which was so strongly manifest in Germany as the result of the Reuchlin controversy. Erasmus probably realized that England was becoming colder towards him, a result that Edward Lee must have powerfully contributed to bring about.

Be this as it may, we next see him dedicating a book, *The Method of True Theology,* to Albert of Brandenburg, whose interests Tetzel was subserving by his way of preaching the *Indulgences,* and with whom at that time Luther had locked horns. Besides being Archbishop of Mainz, he was also one of the Electors of the Empire, and was in a position to do great things for Erasmus should the fancy strike him. In any case Erasmus deemed him a person worth cultivating. He also wrote flattering letters at this time to many others who were in the way of doing him favors if they felt so disposed, and among these were Antony, the son of John of Bergen and nephew of his old patron the Bishop of Cambrai; James Banisius, one of the ablest diplomatists of the Emperor's court; Gilles, the seigneur of Busleiden, a very wealthy gentleman of Brabant; and others.

CHAPTER VIII

DEATH OF COLET: COLET'S CONVOCATION SERMON

John Colet died at about this period, or to be exact, on September 16, 1519. The friendship between Erasmus and himself dated back twenty years, and, though it had been once imperiled by what Colet regarded as Erasmus' insufferable habit of begging, it continued in the main unbroken until Colet's death. Upon some points their tastes met, but they were less numerous than their points of difference. We have already described Colet's sterling virtues, his spotless purity of life, his asceticism, his abnegation of self, his love for the young, and his zeal for their proper education. When they first met, Colet had just returned from making the grand tour of Italy which had been the dream of Erasmus for many years. From Colet he had learned all the major and minor details of the journey, where to go, what to see, the institutions of learning to be visited, and the famous scholars whose acquaintance was to be made. That this new friend was at this time quite wealthy was not the least of his attractions for Erasmus; but in addition to this there was the fact that they were about of the same age, that St. Paul and St. Jerome were favorites of both, and that in all matters relating to classical learning Colet readily yielded to the superior knowledge of this brilliant monk who had been so highly lauded to him by his good friend Prior Charnock. This last was a subtle though quite unintentional flattery on the part of Colet, who never, as far as we know, was in the habit of flattering anyone; and this marks one of the great differences between himself and Erasmus, who was all his life aware of the power of flattery and made use of it to its full extent. Like all who met him, Colet was fascinated by the polished and witty conversation of Erasmus, and had visions of what this learned and brilliant man might do for the cause of God's Church. But Colet was not impulsive and, as Erasmus said, was accustomed to think before he spoke, but when he spoke what he had to say was well considered. Such impressive utterance is a characteristic of earnest souls. He was a man of decision, and already his life's purposes were fixed while those of Erasmus were yet contingent. He had pursued knowledge only as a means to an end, while Erasmus had pursued knowledge as the end itself. But as Lupton, Colet's biographer, says, and we most cordially agree with him:

> His sincerity and earnestness of purpose, and the sense of reality conveyed in his advocacy of any opinion he held to be true, must have done much to steady a mind like that of Erasmus, undecided as yet in its choice of an object of life, and, in particular, averse from the study of theology.[1]

[1] *Life of Colet*, p. 101.

He was slow in taking a position, but when once it was taken, he was not easily moved from it. His mind was too analytic to bend before the impetuosity and vehemence of even a skilled debater like Erasmus; and the reason for this lay in the fact that what would be merely opinions for most men were in his case sure and logical deductions from irrefragable premises.[2]

It is no wonder that in Erasmus, with his lofty tone, his acute observation of men and things, his brilliant pen, his powers of debate, Colet recognized qualities which he himself would have liked to possess; but when we consider his own special virtues—his unselfishness, his profoundly religious nature, his spotless character, we may even add his sanctity—Colet suffers not at all in any comparison with his more brilliant friend. But if the splendid gifts of Erasmus and the saintliness of Colet could have been combined in any one man, then would have been seen the advent on this earth of another St. Bernard, who would have been to Leo X the guide and monitor that the great Abbot of Clairvaux had been to Innocent II in similar times of stress and disorder within the Church. When Erasmus praises a man, we are always treated to a eulogy in the superlative degree, which sometimes makes us slow in accepting his estimate of his contemporaries; but in the case of Colet we have also the testimony of Sir Thomas More, who was accustomed to indulge in panegyric very sparingly. So when he tells us, in speaking of Colet after his demise, that "none more learned or more holy had lived among them for many ages past," we may receive it as sterling truth.[3] As between Colet and Erasmus, it was the Englishman who more resembled St. Bernard. When he essayed to criticize the unworthiness of some of the clergy, it was with something of the same holy indignation that the divine Master manifested when he drove the money-lenders from the Temple. He had no Lucianic virulence to display, no personal dislike to gratify, no feeling of contempt to express, but only an intense desire to see the worship of God presided over by devout and God-fearing men. For himself he claimed nothing, and was humbleness itself; but he was bold as a lion where the interests of his Master were in peril. This courage of the spirit led him even to differ from and criticize some of the great writers of the Church, including St. Augustine and St. Thomas Aquinas,[4] which yet did not prevent him from recognizing the transcendent merits of both these fathers. Everything about him was genuine. There was no simulation of piety, no ostentation, no bitterness of spirit; but all was sincerity and manliness, truly indicative of a fine sense of honor. When he was persecuted by Fitzjames, Bishop of London, and stigmatized as a man of heretical leanings, he showed a true Christian spirit, and mentioned his troubles to Erasmus without the least bitterness. He clearly appreciated the fact that the hierarchy differed widely in its make-up, that perhaps the majority were frankly worldly, and the minority were

[2] This is very well illustrated by his reply to Erasmus in the debate which they had on the words *Transeat a me, Pater, calix iste.* (See Eras. Ep. 110.)

[3] See *Epistolæ aliquot eruditorum, in loco.*

[4] See Seebohm, *Oxford Reformers,* pp. 36, 82. Also Murray's *Erasmus and Luther, Their Attitude to Toleration,* p. 430.

divided into the sincere and charitable, and the sincere but fanatical; and that Fitzjames was in the latter category. He readily made allowance for the weakness of our common nature; and while recognizing the fanaticism of Fitzjames, who could bring himself to burn his fellow-man alive for what was then deemed an offense against the Divinity, he at the same time realized that the same hierarchy contained noble souls such as the kindly Warham and the high-minded Fisher. He was at one with Erasmus in hating all kinds of imposture, but was more patient with the weaknesses of humanity. On the question of formalism in the Church they were as far apart as the poles, for Erasmus was against all ceremonial, while Colet was in full conformity with his contemporaries on this subject. This would indicate that Colet had a deeper insight into the spiritual needs and limitations of the ordinary man. He realized that the ignorant and illiterate have great difficulty in understanding abstractions, and require concrete representations in order to be able in any measure to grasp abstract ideas. An extreme case will readily show this. Contrast, for instance, the mind of a savage with that of Erasmus, and we can readily see that these two minds must function differently in acquiring a knowledge of a Supreme Being; for while Erasmus can easily lift up his mind to the contemplation of God's power and immensity, the poor savage cannot unaided conceive a Divine Power, working solely on the immaterial. It is beyond him. But show him the idea of the All-Powerful by means of some concrete object which he does understand, and his mind will rise from the material to the immaterial, and eventually he will find "sermons in stones and good in everything." The Church has always recognized this fact and made use of it, knowing as she does that most of her children have not been blest with the higher gifts of the imagination, and that, as a consequence, she must adapt herself to their powers of comprehension and understanding. Herein lies the basic reason for her ceremonial rites, a reason which Colet seems to have accepted naturally, and which Erasmus, with all his wisdom, seems to have failed to grasp.

If we desire to get a true picture of Colet as he appeared to his contemporaries, we shall find it, not in the sketch of his life which Erasmus has left us, representing rather a Colet idealized by Erasmus than the man as he actually was, but in a sermon which has come down to our days, and which was preached by him before the bishops and priests of the archdiocese of Canterbury to the number of over four hundred, on February 6, 1512.[5] This is perhaps the most valuable document that is now available for the use of the historian, whether he be Protestant or Catholic, who desires to draw for us of to-day a picture of the state of Catholicity in England in the days of Colet. And the picture must be true to life for many reasons, principal of which are these two, that it was unflattering to the auditors, and that the preacher was a man whose sanctity of life warranted him in assuming the right to criticize his brethren. The occasion brings to us thoughts of St. Bernard, St. Bernardin of Siena, and Savonarola; for with no less courage

[5] New style.

than they displayed in similar circumstances he laid open the sore which was ulcerating in the vitals of ecclesiastical life at that moment. But it is noticeable that Colet, who has been called by Seebohm one of the Reformers before the Reformation, said not the slightest word against the doctrinal beliefs of his hearers, and that while he castigated their lives he had no censure for their theology. In other terms, we may assume that, though their conduct was open to just reprehension, their attitude towards what the Church taught was exactly like his own, and was consequently not open to either challenge or rebuke. What his own attitude was, this convocation sermon tells us admirably. We should like to reproduce it here in its entirety for the light that it sheds on Colet and the condition of the English clergy at that time; but, since it is very long, we will try to give a lucid synopsis which may serve the same purpose.

Archbishop Warham presided over the Convocation, and we may assume that Foxe of Winchester, Fisher of Rochester, and others of Erasmus' acquaintance were present. Never had St. Paul's Cathedral held a more illustrious audience, and never had a more earnest speaker tried to touch their consciences. Almost the first sentence of Colet was an exhortation to them to proceed to the reformation of the Church, by which he meant, as the context shows, its unworthy ministers. He knew that he was going to tell them a few unpalatable truths about themselves, so he hastens to inform them that the task was not of his own seeking. But we shall let him speak himself where we can without being too discursive, premising that we have for clarity modernized the ancient spelling:

> But forsooth I came not willingly, for I knew mine own unworthiness. . . . For I judged it utterly unworthy and unmeet, yea, and almost too malapert, that I, a servant, should counsel my lords; that I, a son, should teach you, my fathers. Truly it had been meeter for some one of the fathers; that is to say, you prelates might have done it with more grave authority and greater wisdom. But the commandment was to be obeyed of the most reverend father and lord the archbishop, president of this council, which laid upon me this burden, truly too heavy for me. . . .
>
> And before all things let us pray unto God the Father almighty; first remembering our most holy father the pope, and all spiritual pastors, with all christian people; furthermore the most reverend father and lord the archbishop, president of this council, and all bishops, and all the clergy, and all the people of England; remembering finally this your congregation, desiring God to inspire your minds so accordingly to agree, to such profit and fruit of the Church, that ye seem not, after the council finished, to have been gathered together in vain and without cause. Let us all say *Pater Noster.*

> To exhort you, reverend fathers, to the endeavor of reformation of the church's estate, (because that nothing hath so disfigured the face of the church as hath the faction of secular and worldly living

in clerks and priests) I know not where more conveniently to take beginning of my tale than of the apostle Paul, in whose temple you are gathered together. For he, writing unto the Romans, and under their name unto you, saith: *Be you not conformed to this world, but be you reformed in the newness of your understanding, that you may prove what is the good will of God, well pleasing and perfect.* This did the apostle write to all christian men, but most chiefly unto priests and bishops. Priests and bishops are the light of the world. For unto them said our Saviour: *You are the light of the world.* And he said also: *If the light that is in the world be darkness, how dark shall the darkness be?* That is to say, if priests and bishops, that should be as lights, run in the dark way of the world, how dark then shall the secular people be? Wherefore St. Paul said chiefly unto priests and bishops: *Be you not conformable to this world, but be ye reformed.*

In the which words the apostle doth two things. First, he doth forbid that we be not conformable to the world and be made carnal. Furthermore he doth command that we be reformed in the spirit of God, whereby we are spiritual. I intending to follow this order, I will speak first of conformation, then after of reformation.

Be you not (saith he) *conformable to this world.* The apostle calleth the *world* the ways and manners of secular living, the which chiefly doth rest in four evils of this world: that is to say, in devilish pride, in carnal concupiscence, in worldly covetousness, in secular business. . . . The same are now and reign in the church, and in men of the church. . . .

And first for to speak of pride of life: how much greediness and appetite of honor and dignity is nowadays in men of the church? How run they, yea, almost out of breath, from one benefice to another; from the less to the more, from the lower to the higher? Who seeth not this? Who seeing this sorroweth not? . . .

The second secular evil is carnal concupiscence. Hath not this vice so grown and waxed in the church as a flood of their lust, so that there is nothing looked for more diligently in this most busy time of the most part of priests than that that doth delight and please the senses? They give themselves to feasts and banqueting; they spend themselves in vain babbling; they give themselves to sports and plays; they apply themselves to hunting and hawking; they drown themselves in the delights of this world. Procurers and finders of lusts they set by. . . .

Covetousness is the third secular evil, the which saint John the apostle calleth the concupiscence of the eyes. Saint Paul calleth it idolatry. This abominable pestilence hath so entered in the mind almost of all priests, and so hath blinded the eyes of the mind, that we are blind to all things but only unto those which seem to bring unto us some gains. For what other things seek ye nowadays in the Church than fat benefices and high promotions? Yea, and in the same promotions, of what other thing do we pass upon than that of our tithes and rents? that we care not how many, how chargeful, how

great benefices we take, so that they be of great value. O covetousness! saint Paul justly called thee the root of all evil. Of thee cometh this heaping of benefices upon benefices. . . . O covetousness! of thee cometh these chargeful visitations of bishops. Of thee cometh the corruptness of courts, and these daily new inventions wherewith the silly people are so sore vexed. Of thee cometh the besyte and wantonness of officials. . . . Why should I rehearse the rest? To be short, and to conclude at one word; all corruptness, all the decay of the Church, all the offences of the world, come of the covetousness of priests; according to that of St. Paul, that here I repeat again and beat into your ears: *covetousness is the root of all evil.*

By this time it is permitted us to surmise that his audience were thoroughly aroused, and that those whose offenses he was bringing home to them were in anything but an amiable frame of mind. We may imagine that the good old Archbishop was also by this time well content at the consternation which must have been visible on many faces. Such a scourging had not been administered to them since Wickliffe's day; and, if we remember this, it is not to be wondered at that charges of heresy would soon be made against Colet. But he continued on with his sermon, unmoved by the frank unfriendliness of the greater portion of his audience.

The fourth secular evil . . . is the continual secular occupation, wherein priests and bishops nowadays doth busy themselves, the servants rather of men than of God; the warriors rather of this world than of Christ. For the apostle Paul writeth unto Timothy: "[*Let*] *No man, being God's soldier, turmoil himself with secular business.*" The warring of them is not carnal but spiritual. For our warring is to pray, to read and study scriptures, to preach the word of God, to minister the sacraments of health, to do sacrifice for the people, and to offer hosts for their sins. For we are mediators and means unto God for men. The which St. Paul witnesseth, writing to the Hebrews: *Every bishop* (saith he) *taken of men, is ordained for men in those things that be unto God, that he may offer gifts and sacrifices for sins.* . . . And saint Paul crieth unto the Corinthians: If you have any secular business, ordain them to be judges that be most in contempt in the church. Without doubt, of this secularity, and that the clerks and priests, leaving all spiritualism, do turmoil themselves with earthly occupations, many evils do follow.

First, the dignity of priesthood is dishonored . . . when priests are occupied in earthly things, whose conversation ought to be in heaven.

Secondarily, priesthood is despised, when there is no difference betwixt such priests and lay people, but, according to the prophecy of Ozee: *as the people be, so are the priests.*

Thirdly, the beautiful order and holy dignity in the church is confused, when the highest in the church do meddle with vile and

earthly things, and in their stead vile and abject persons do exercise high and heavenly things.

Fourthly, the lay people have great occasion of evils, and cause to fall, when those men whose duty is to draw men from the affection of this world, by their continual conversation in this world teach men to love this world, and of the love of the world cast them down headlong into hell. . . .

We are also nowadays grieved of heretics, men mad with marvelous foolishness. But the heresies of them are not so pestilent and pernicious unto us and the people, as the evil life of priests; the which, if we believe saint Bernard, is a certain kind of heresy, and chief of all and most perilous. For that same holy father, in a certain convocation, preaching unto the priests of his time, . . . said by these words: "There be many catholic and faithful men in speaking and preaching, the which same men are heretics in working. For that that heretics do by evil teaching, that same do they through evil example: they lead the people out of the right way, and bring them into error of life. And so much they are worse than heretics, how much their works prevail their words." . . . By which words he showeth plainly to be two manner of heresies; the one to be of perverse teaching, and the other of naughty life: of which this latter is worse and more perilous. The which reigneth now in the church in priests not living priestly but secularly, to the utter and miserable destruction of the church.

Wherefore, you fathers, you priests, and all you of the clergy, at the last look up and awake from this your sleep in this forgetful world; and at the last being well awaked hear Paul crying unto you: *Be you not conformable unto this world.*

We may certainly assume that by now every one of his listeners was thoroughly awake to the intention of Colet, which was to show them to themselves as they really were, and to make them ashamed of their worldly and unchristian lives. The guilty do not enjoy hearing their faults rehearsed; and we may feel sure that those of his audience to whom his scorching words applied were by this time highly incensed against him. But he had not done with them yet. After telling them that in neglecting their spiritual duties they were conforming to the world, he now proceeded to inculcate on them the necessity of reforming themselves. He continues as follows:

The second thing that saint Paul commandeth, is that we be reformed into a new understanding; that we smell those things that be of God. . . . This reformation and restoring of the church's estate must needs begin of you our fathers, and so follow in us your priests and in all the clergy. . . . The way whereby the church may be reformed into better fashion is not for to make new laws. For there be laws, many enough and out of number, as Solomon saith: *nothing is new under the sun.* For the evils that are now in the church were before in time past; and there is no fault but that fathers have provided very good remedies for it. There are no

trespasses, but that there be laws against them in the body of the canon law. Wherefore in this your assembly let those laws that are made be called before you and rehearsed: those laws, I say, that restrain vice, and those that further virtue.

First, let those laws be rehearsed, that do warn you fathers that you put not over soon your hands on every man, or admit unto holy orders. . . . It is not enough for a priest, after my judgment, to construe a collect, to put forth a question, or to answer to a sophism; but much more a good, a pure, and a holy life, approved manners, meetly learning of holy scripture, some knowledge of the sacraments; chiefly and above all things, the fear of God and love of the heavenly life.

Let the laws be rehearsed, that command that benefices of the church be given to those that are worthy, etc.

Let the laws be rehearsed, that warreth against the spot of Simony. The which corruption, the which infection, the which cruel and odible pestilence, so creepeth now abroad, as the canker evil in the minds of priests, that many of them are not afraid nowadays both by prayer and service, rewards and promises, to get them great dignities.

Let the laws be rehearsed that command personal residence of curates in their churches, etc.

Let be rehearsed the laws and holy rules given of fathers, of the life and honesty of clerics; that forbid that a cleric be no merchant, that he be no usurer, that he be no hunter, that he be no common player, that he bear no weapon; the laws that forbid clerics to haunt taverns, that forbid them to have suspect familiarity with women; the laws that command soberness, and a measurableness in apparel, and temperance in adorning of the body.

Let be rehearsed also to my lords these monks, canons, and religious men, the laws that command them to go the straight way that leadeth unto heaven, leaving the broad way of the world; that commandeth them not to turmoil themselves in business, neither secular nor other; that command that they sow not in princes' courts for earthly things. For it is in the council of Chalcedon that monks ought only to give themselves to prayer and fasting, and to the chastening of their flesh, and observing of their rules.

Above all things, let the laws be rehearsed, that pertain and concern you my reverend fathers and lords bishops, laws of your just and canonical election, in the chapters of your churches, with the calling of the Holy Ghost, etc.

Let the laws be rehearsed of the residence of bishops in their dioceses; that command, that they look diligently, and take heed to the health of souls; that they sow the word of God; that they show themselves in their churches at least on great holy days; that they do sacrifice for their people; that they hear the causes and matters of poor men; that they sustain fatherless children and widows; that they exercise themselves in work of virtue.

Let the laws be rehearsed of the good bestowing of the patri-

mony of Christ: the laws that command that the goods of the church be spent, not in costly building, not in sumptuous apparel and pomps, not in feasting and banqueting, not in excess and wantonness, not in enriching of kinsfolk, not in keeping of dogs, but in things profitable and necessary to the church, etc.

Let the laws be rehearsed, yea, and that oftentimes, that take away the filths and uncleanliness of courts; that take away those daily new-found crafts for lucre; that busy them to pull away this foul covetousness, the which is the spring and cause of all evils, the which is the well of all iniquity.

At the last let be renewed those laws and constitutions of fathers of the celebration of councils, that command provincial councils to be oftener used for the reformation of the church. For there never happeneth nothing more hurtful to the church of Christ, than the lack both of council general and provincial. . . .

The clergy's and spiritual's part once reformed in the church, then may we with a just order proceed to the reformation of the lay's part; the which truly will be very easy to do, if we first be reformed. For the body followeth the soul; and, such rulers as are in the city, like dwellers be in it. Wherefore, if priests that have the charge of souls be good, straight the people will be good. Our goodness shall teach them more clearly to be good than all other teachings and preachings. Our goodness shall compel them into the right way truly more effectuously than all your suspendings and cursings. . . .

These are they, reverend fathers and right famous men, that I thought to be said for the reformation of the church's estate. I trust ye will take them of your gentleness to the best. And if peradventure it be thought that I have passed my bounds in this sermon, or have said anything out of temper, forgive it me; and ye shall forgive a man speaking of very zeal, a man sorrowing the decay of the church. And consider the thing itself, not regarding my foolishness. Consider the miserable form and state of the church, and endeavor yourselves with all your minds to reform it. Suffer not, fathers, this your so great a gathering to depart in vain. Suffer not this your congregation to slip for naught. Truly ye are gathered often-times together; but, by your favor to speak the truth, yet I see not what fruit cometh of your assembling, namely to the church.

Go you now in the Spirit that you have called on, that, by the help of it, you may in this your council find out, discern, and ordain those things that may be profitable to the church, praise unto you, and honor unto God. *Unto whom be all honor and glory for ever more. Amen.*[6]

We cannot be mistaken in our estimate of a man who would talk in this fashion on such an occasion. His words have the ring of sincerity

[6] The sermon in full is given in Lupton's *Life of Colet,* Appendix C, pp. 293-304.

and earnestness, and show forth vividly the love he bore the ancient Church of his English forefathers. In simple language and unadorned he pointed out the dangers that encompassed her from the neglect and indifference of her ordained ministers; and he called upon them to redeem by their future zeal in her behalf the vows they had taken. He avoided all meretricious ornamentation of discourse, and clothed in plain words the thoughts with which he was inspired. Erasmus said of him after his death that, when he listened to him speaking, he imagined he was hearing Plato, and adds that he had never had converse with him without feeling the better for it, or at least feeling less wicked. We are inclined to think that Erasmus has mistaken Plato for an infinitely greater philosopher still, and that it was the living influence of Christ that dwelt in the words of Colet. Something of this sort seemed to have impressed itself on him, for later on he exclaims:

> Oh, true theologian! Oh, wonderful preacher of evangelical doctrine! With what earnest zeal did he drink in the philosophy of Christ! How eagerly did he imbibe the spirit and feelings of St. Paul! How did the purity of his whole life correspond to his heavenly teaching! [7]

His sole desire was to see the Church of Christ once again infused with the spirit of its Founder, permeated with His love of sacrifice, animated with His zeal for the souls of men. And to aid in the accomplishment of this great end, he devoted his whole life to the instruction and education of boys who were later to show by their lives and examples that they were true disciples of the crucified Savior. No show or ostentation, no striving after applause, no bid for fame or glory, but a steadfast working in the direction of his ideals. And the unselfishness of it all was the thing that more than anything else astonished Erasmus, who with all his greatness had never experienced the happiness of self-abnegation. Colet would have been quite at ease in the company of such men as St. Peter Damien or St. Charles Borromeo; but it is doubtful whether such would have been the case with Erasmus.

We have dwelt on the character of Colet somewhat at length, and for several reasons, principal of which is that his character is such an amiable one, but more especially that there has gone abroad the impression that he was not quite in sympathy with some of the doctrines of the Church. Let us say here once and for all that such an impression is not in accord with the facts. If he is to be styled "a Reformer before the Reformation," then let it be understood that his desire was for a reform of his fellows in the ranks of the clergy who evidently were in need of it; but that never at any time had he the slightest wish to change the doctrines of the Church. And Seebohm himself recognizes the truth of this statement, in his work on the Oxford Reformers from which we shall concisely quote:

> The fellow-work of the Oxford Reformers was to a great extent accomplished when Colet died. From its small beginnings during

[7] Eras. Ep. 1053, ll. 531-5.

> their college intercourse at Oxford it had risen into prominence and made its power felt throughout Europe. But now for three hundred years it was to stop, and, as it were, to be submerged under a new wave of the great tide of human progress. For, as has been said, the Protestant Reformation was in many respects a new movement, and not altogether a continuation of that of the Oxford Reformers.
>
> As yet the "tragedy of Luther" had appeared only like the little cloud no bigger than a man's hand rising above the horizon. But scarcely had a year passed from Colet's death than the whole heavens were overcast by it, and Christendom was suddenly involved, by the madness of her rulers, in all the terrors of a religious convulsion, which threatened to shake social and civil, as well as ecclesiastical, institutions to their foundations.[8]

The Protestant Reformation was indeed a new movement, and, so far from being akin to the ideas of clerical reformation that animated the mind of Colet, its principles were eventually so destructive of the old order of things that the mere amendment of the lives of the clergy can in no way be considered even one of its corollaries. And it was this very destructiveness of the Reformation that led Erasmus to call the whole movement the "tragedy of Luther." What side Colet would have espoused in the coming conflict, had he lived, we may infer partly from his own conduct during his whole life, and partly from the action taken by Erasmus himself.

[8] *Op. cit.*, p. 505.

CHAPTER IX

THE "COLLOQVIA"

From this time forward the history of Erasmus is inextricably entangled with that of Martin Luther; and it were a vain task, in treating of either, to keep the other entirely out of the picture. Luther had early come to the conclusion that Erasmus was a man without heart and, possibly, without the true religious spirit, and that he might become a source of great danger to sound Christianity. He had just read one of his books, which, judging from the description, was the *Iulius exclusus,* numerous copies of which were then in circulation, and of it and its author he thus speaks to his monastic associate John Lange:

> I am reading our Erasmus, but day by day my regard for him grows less. It suits me that he constantly and learnedly charges not only monks but priests with being infected with inveterate lethargic ignorance, and condemns them therefor; but I fear that he does not sufficiently advance Christ and the grace of God, of which he is much more ignorant than Faber Stapulensis: the human predominates in him over the divine. Although I judge him unwillingly, I warn you not to read all he has written, nor to accept without consideration. For these are parlous times to-day, and I see that not everyone is a truly wise Christian because he is versed in Greek and Hebrew. Even St. Jerome with his five languages cannot equal Augustine with only one, although it may seem far otherwise to Erasmus. . . . March 1, 1517.[1]

This was written before Luther had dreamed of any challenge to Rome, and even before his affair with Tetzel. The more he read of Erasmus' pernicious book the more dangerous he perceived its influence would be on the young scholars by whom he was surrounded. And it was by reason of its exceeding cleverness that the book was deadly. Writing to Spalatin some months afterwards, he tells him:

> I had decided, my dear Spalatin, to tell no one of Erasmus' *Dialogue,*[2] my sole reason being that it was so delightful, so full of humor, so clever (that is, woven together in such an Erasmian way), that the reader is compelled to laugh and jest over the vices and miseries in the Church of Christ, which ought rather to be complained of before God by every Christian with the greatest lamentations.[3]

And this is Luther's attitude towards all of Erasmus' satire.

[1] DeWette, *Luthers Briefe,* Vol. I, p. 52.
[2] Erasmus had not yet given it the title by which we now know it.
[3] *Ibid.,* p. 76. (November, 1517.)

There is a rather curious history connected with the issuing of the *Colloquies* of which also Luther always spoke dubiously. It seems that, as the fame of Erasmus increased, every scrap of his writings that could be unearthed, including the trifles of his frivolous years in Paris, were being printed. Augustine Caminade had at one time made a collection of these trifles, and had added to them similar items from other writers whose Latinity was not acceptable to Erasmus. In a like casual way Beatus Rhenanus had run across this aggregation of dialogues, the most of which were assuredly written by Erasmus, and had handed them to Froben to be printed. Erasmus was shocked at the careless Latinity, and immediately issued a new edition from the press of Thierry Martens at Louvain, which edition appeared on March 1, 1519. The book had a wonderful vogue, and we must now proceed to point out the reason. It gave in concise form and elegant Latin a series of dialogues in which two or more persons participated; and because the topics discussed were commonplace, the book made an appeal not only to scholars but also to the everyday man, and particularly to boys, for whom many of the dialogues were evidently written. This latter fact must be remembered, since into them Erasmus had inserted his peculiar views on monks, religious vows, pilgrimages, *indulgences,* the Popes, and other matters which will appear as we proceed. For young and immature boys such topics were not the most desirable subjects to treat; we must consider the effect upon plastic minds. And when to this defect is added the fact that the work is smirched with obscenities, that there is an evident desire to make light of serious subjects, that a work intended for boys is made perforce an instrument for casting ridicule upon personal enemies and a means of propaganda for individual views upon highly debatable matters, we must confess that the work was in doubtful taste and that Luther's strictures seem very just. To demonstrate this we shall have to make some few extracts from the *Colloquies,* premising, however, that the reader will have to take our word for the obscenities, or seek them out in the original Latin. We shall also remind the reader that he must remember Erasmus' fatal habit of exaggeration when it is a question of gratifying his likes and, more especially, his dislikes. His dialogue of *The Funeral* will perhaps show this better than any words of ours:

> *Phædeus.* Well, hear of George's end first. When the sure signs of death had manifested themselves, the crowd of doctors, who had long cared for the sick man but had concealed the hopelessness of his case, began to demand their fees.
>
> *Marcolphus.* How many doctors were there?
>
> *Ph.* Sometimes ten, sometimes twelve, but never less than six.
>
> *Ma.* That was enough to kill even a sound man.
>
> *Ph.* After they had got their money, they privately informed the relatives that death was not far off, and admonished them to look out for the interests of his soul since his body was past cure. The sick man was gently informed of this by some of his nearest friends, who suggested to him to leave the care of his body to God.

and to devote himself only to what pertained to a happy death. Hearing this, George glanced at the physicians angrily, taking it in bad part that he was to be abandoned by them, but they replied that they were doctors, not gods, that they had done all that their knowledge suggested, but that no medicine could avail him longer, saying which, they betook themselves off into a neighboring room.

Ma. Why did they linger after they had received their fees?

Ph. They had not agreed on their diagnosis; one said it was a dropsy, another called it a tympanites, a third held out for peritonitis, while others called it this and that disease, and all the time they were treating the patient they were quarreling most acridly about the nature of his malady.

Ma. What a happy time the sick man must have had during all this!

Ph. To decide the question, they requested him through the agency of his wife for permission to make a post-mortem examination of his body, saying that this was an honorable thing, and much in vogue among the nobility, besides being very profitable perhaps to a great many, and likely to add to the sum of his good deeds. Lastly, they promised that they themselves would buy thirty masses for the benefit of his soul. He would not hear to it, but at length was won by the blandishments of his wife and relatives. This being achieved, the coterie of doctors withdrew, for they claim that it is improper for those whose duty it is to save life to be spectators of a death, or to attend funerals. After this they sent for Bernardine, a very reverend man as you know, and Prior of the Franciscans, in order that he might hear his confession. Scarcely had he finished his confession when there came to the house a crowd of the four Orders of Mendicant Friars, as they are styled.

Ma. What, so many vultures to one carcass?

Ph. Then the parish priest was summoned to give Extreme Unction and to administer Holy Communion.

Ma. That was well done.

Pa. But it almost came to a bloody battle between the parish priest and the monks.

Ma. What, at the dying man's bedside?

Ph. Yes indeed, and in the very presence of Christ Himself.

Ma. What started such a row so quickly?

Ph. When the parish priest found out that the sick man had made his confession to the Franciscan, he refused to give Extreme Unction, Holy Communion, or the burial rites, unless he should hear his confession personally, saying that he was the priest of that parish, that he was the one who was responsible for his flock to God, and that this would be impossible for him if he were unaware of the state of their consciences.

Ma. And do you not think he was talking justly?

Ph. They did not think so, at any rate, for they all strenuously remonstrated with him, especially Bernardine, and Vincent the Dominican.

Ma. What reason did they allege?

Ph. They assailed the parish priest with great abuse, calling him an ass, and fit only to care for pigs. "I," said Vincent, "am a Bachelor of Sacred Theology, soon to be a Licentiate, and presently to be honored with the degree of Doctor; you can hardly read the Gospel, so much are you unfit to treat matters of conscience. But if you have a desire to gratify your curiosity, find out what your wife and her brats are doing at home, or busy yourself with other matters of which I would be ashamed to speak.

Ma. What said he to that? did he remain silent?

Ph. Silent! Nay, never was there such a clamor. "I could make better Bachelors than you from bean-stalks," he retorted. "Where did Dominic and Francis, the founders of your Orders, learn anything of the philosophy of Aristotle, or the reasonings of Thomas, or the speculations of Scotus, or where did they win the degree of Bachelor? You have crept into a still credulous world, though a few of you are humble, and some of you are even learned and pious. You made your nests in the fields and small villages, but soon you entered into the wealthiest cities, and even into the most opulent parts of these same cities. There are so many places which are unable to maintain a pastor, and that was your opportunity; now you frequent only the homes of the wealthy. You boast much of your influence with the Popes; but your privileges avail you nothing except in the absence of the bishop, the parish priest, or his curate. In my church not one of you shall preach while I am its pastor. I am not a Bachelor, neither was St. Martin; yet he held a bishopric. If I am lacking in learning, I will not go to you for it. Do you think the world is so stupid that when people see the habit of Dominic or Francis they will think the sanctity of those two saints is inherent in it? What business is it of yours what I do in my own house? The people know very well what you do in your cells, and how you treat the nuns; and it is common knowledge with everybody that the houses of the wealthy frequented by you are made none the more happy or pure on that account." The rest, Marcolphus, I dare not relate, but he handled those reverend fathers not at all reverently; nor would there have been any end to it had not George held up his hand as a sign that he had something to say, and it was with the utmost difficulty that the disturbance was quieted for awhile. Then the sick man said, "Let there be peace among you; to you my pastor I will make my confession over again. For the tolling of the bells, for the funeral chants, for my monument and my burial service, the money shall be paid you before you leave the house, and I will see to it that you shall have no cause to complain of me."

Ma. Did the parish priest refuse this fair offer?

Ph. No, but he murmured something to himself about the confession, which he excused the sick man from repeating, saying that there was no need now to fatigue both the patient and the priest by saying it all over again. "But," he said, "had he made his con-

fession to me, he would perhaps have made a more pious will; as it is, you may look out for yourselves." This fairness of the sick man did not suit the monks at all, who took it very badly that so much of the booty had fallen to the parish priest; but I interfered and caused the dispute to be settled. The parish priest administered Extreme Unction and Holy Communion, and, having been paid, departed.

Ma. Well, surely a calm followed this tempest?

Ph. Nay, a tempest far worse than this immediately broke loose.

Ma. For what reason, I pray you?

Ph. You shall hear. The four Orders of the Mendicants had crowded the house, and now to these was added a fifth, that of the Cross-bearers. Against this Order, as being unauthorized, the other four rose up in a great uproar, asking the newcomers where they ever saw a wagon with five wheels, or with what face they could count more Orders than there were evangelists. "Bring hither in the same manner," said they, "all the beggars from the bridges and the byways."

Ma. What did the Cross-bearers say to that?

Ph. They inquired in turn how the wagon of the Church used to run when there were no Orders of Mendicants, likewise when there was only one, and later when there were three. For the number of the evangelists, said they, has no more relation to our Orders than it has to dice which display four angles on each side. Who brought the Augustinians into the Mendicant Orders, or who the Carmelites? When did Augustine go a-begging, and when Elias? For they claim these two as the founders of their Orders. . . .

Ma. But what was the end of the fracas?

Ph. The sick man bade his wife tell them that if they would keep still a while, he would settle the difficulty. . . . He gave directions that all their Orders should be present at his funeral, even the fifth one, and that an even share of money be given to each, but they were not to attend the funeral feast lest quarrels might arise. . . . And it was provided that the funeral service, which was to be performed by the parish priest, should be accompanied by a choir of musicians to do him honor. While these and other things were being arranged, the sick man shivered, and gave the most convincing evidence that his last hour was come, so the last act was got ready. . . .

Ma. And so he died?

Ph. Not yet. They spread on the floor a mat rolled up at one end to make a pillow.

Ma. What is coming now?

Ph. They sprinkled this lightly with ashes, and there they laid the body of the dying man. Over him they spread the Franciscan habit, having first blessed it and sprinkled it with holy water. The cowl was laid under his head, for it could no longer be put on him; and together with this was placed his *indulgence* with its exemptions.

Ma. That is a new way of dying.

Ph. Yes, but they assert that the devil has no power against those who die thus, and they allege that besides others St. Martin and St. Francis passed away in that manner. . . . They then gave the sick man a crucifix and a wax candle. To the crucifix thus offered he said, "I used to be safe in war when protected by mine own shield; now I will oppose this shield to mine enemy"; and having kissed the crucifix, he placed it at his left side. When the blessed candle was presented to him he said, "In the days gone by I wielded a trusty spear in the wars; now I will brandish this lance against the enemy of souls."

Ma. Spoken like a brave soldier!

Ph. These were the last words he uttered, for presently death checked his speech, and he began to yield up his spirit. Bernardine hung over the dying man on the right side of the bed, Vincent on the left, with both of them jabbering at a great rate. One showed him the image of St. Francis, the other that of St. Dominic. The rest of them scattered around the room murmured some psalms in a lugubrious tone. Bernardine kept shouting into his right ear, Vincent into his left.

Ma. What were they shouting?

Ph. Bernardine spoke something after this fashion: "George Balearicus, if you approve of all that is now here being done, bow your head to the right." Which he did. Vincent, on the other side chimes in: "Do not be afraid, George; you have for your defenders Francis and Dominic; be at ease. Think of what a number of merits you possess, and what an *indulgence;* and also remember that my soul is in pledge for yours, should you have any doubt. Now if you realize and approve these things, bow your head to the left." And so he did. Then some more shouting, followed by, "if you realize these things, press my hand." And he squeezed his hand. So the bowing of the head and the squeezing of the hand continued for almost four hours. When at last George began to gasp, then Bernardine rising pronounced the absolution, which he could not pronounce until George was in his last agony. This occurred at midnight, and in the morning they proceeded to the autopsy. . . . After this the dissected body was enshrouded after a fashion in the habit of St. Francis, and at the end of the dinner they buried him with all the pomp that had been arranged for, etc., etc.

It is hardly conceivable that any such scene as the above was ever enacted at any bedside in any Christian land. Let us say once for all that Martin Luther was at that moment in charge of forty monasteries of monks; and it is not at all likely that the man who had the courage to challenge Tetzel, to reprove the powerful Archbishop of Mainz, and even to defy Pope Leo himself, on the subject of *indulgences,* would have been able to restrain his just indignation or to refrain from punishing deservedly any of the monks under him who would have been guilty of such inhuman and inopportune practices. And his opportuni-

ties for observation were much better than those of Erasmus, for he had been a monk for more than three times as long a period as the latter. And though in after days he inveighed against what he styled their uselessness, and even commented severely on the ignorance and dissolute lives of many of them, he never besmirched them as a class, or stigmatized them to posterity as something most foul, most loathsome, and most abominable. And that he who had spared nothing of the old Church, which was indeed vulnerable, did not side with Erasmus in his disparagement of the lives of the monks, may perhaps be a sufficient indication to us that he did not share Erasmus' sentiments concerning them to any great extent. To Erasmus nothing that bore even the slightest suggestion of the monk was safe from his biting comments; and one of the things that always aroused his ire was the burying of anyone in a religious habit, a custom very common in those days. To us of this century, who are familiar with the custom of our leading guilds, lodges, and societies, of reading their special funeral ritual at the grave of a departed brother, it is not strange that our Catholic ancestors deemed it an honor, and possibly a spiritual benefit, to be buried under the auspices, and with the regalia, of some Order like that of St. Francis or St. Dominic. The custom was harmless even if Erasmus did not deem it salutary, and ought never to have disturbed a really great mind like his own. But it was like the proverbial red rag to a bull, and he simply could not stand it. The custom was widespread, even many of the English kings electing to die in the habit of Francis or Dominic, and if this really trifling and immaterial thing gave them comfort at the hour of their passage into the mysterious beyond, who should grudge them that final consolation? It was pointed out to Erasmus that two of his own acquaintances, Rudolph Agricola and Christopher Longolius, were buried in the religious habit, to which he made the rather ungracious retort that men were delirious when at the point of death, wishing to convey, we suppose, that they did not know what was being done to them. To what lengths his hatred of the monk's habit could carry him is well seen by his remark, "How happy are the lice that always dwell in that holy garment!" But these crotchets of his are only of minor importance in a book like the *Colloquies,* which was written professedly for boys. The thing that most arrests our attention is the kind of pabulum he was furnishing for their tender minds. What a choice subject for a dialogue for boys is the following title: "The Young Man and the Harlot." It was probably attractive in those days from a commercial standpoint, and still remains so; but as an uplift to youth it leaves much to be desired. The title of another of his *Colloquies* is "The Sermon, or Merdardus," which alternate title the usages of polite society will not permit us to translate. Indeed the things in these *Colloquies* which will not bear translation are very numerous, but Roscommon had not yet penned his famous couplet,

> Immodest words admit of no defense,
> For want of decency is want of sense.
> *Essay on Translated Verse,* 113.

A few more dubious titles of colloquies for boys are "The Virgin Averse to Matrimony," "The Penitent Virgin," "The Uneasy Wife," "The Soldier and the Carthusian," "The Horse Cheat," and "The Lying-in-Woman." Here is a questionable bit from "The Soldier's Life":

Thrasymachus. But without jesting, I fail to see how you can expiate all these crimes, unless you betake yourself to Rome.

Hanno. Nay, I know a shorter way than that.

Th. Which is that?

Ha. I will go to the Dominicans, and there for a trifle I can compound with the commissioners.

Th. What, even for sacrileges?

Ha. Yes, even if I had robbed Christ Himself and cut off His head, such sweeping *indulgences* have they, and such powers of compounding.

We can hardly consider this "meat for babes." Another of his *Colloquies* describes the tender conversations of "The Youth and the Maiden." We will give a few passages:

Maiden. Yet virginity is still considered attractive and praiseworthy by everyone.

Youth. A young maiden is indeed a beautiful object; but what more monstrous than an old maid? Had your mother not shed her blossom we should never have had you, my tender flower. So that if, as I hope, our union shall prove fruitful, for one virginity we shall return many.

Maiden. Yet they say that chastity is most pleasing to God.

Youth. Therefore I wish to marry a chaste maiden and live chastely with her. It will be more a union of minds than bodies. We will breed for our country, we will breed for Christ, so how far from virginity will such a marriage be? And perchance by and by we shall live just as Joseph lived with Mary. But in the meantime let us learn what this virginity is, for we cannot arrive at perfection immediately.

Maiden. What is this I hear, virginity must be violated in order to be comprehended?

Youth. Why not, just as by drinking wine little by little we learn to be abstemious. Whom do you deem the more temperate, he who is seated at a table loaded with delicacies and yet is sparing, or he who is far removed from those things which provoke to intemperance?

Maiden. I consider him the more temperate by far whom tempting abundance cannot pervert.

Youth. To whom is praise for chastity more truly due, to him who mutilates himself, or to him who with all his members whole still abstains from lust?

Maiden. Certainly I would yield the praise of chastity to the latter; to the former I would attribute only unsoundness of mind.

Youth. But do not those who bind themselves by solemn vows to abjure matrimony in some degree unsex themselves?

Maiden. It would seem so.

For obvious reasons the rest of our extract will be given in the original:

Youth. Iam non est virtus non coire.

Maiden. Non est?

Youth. Put it this way. Si per se virtus esset non coire, vitium esset coire.

Maiden. Quando hoc incidit?

Youth. Quoties ab vxore ius suum petit maritus, præsertim si prolis amore quærit complexum.

Maiden. Quid si lasciuiat, non est fas negare?

Youth. Fas est monere, vel rogare potius blandius, vt temperet; pernegare instanti fas non est. Quanquam hac quidem in parte raras audio querelas maritorum de suis vxoribus.

A parlous youth indeed, and wise in his generation. The book had a marvelous sale, we are told, and the reason is not far to seek. The pornographic has always had its attractions for the many. Few fathers would be apt to furnish their boys with the following as a lesson in speaking Latin. It professed to relate to two matrons, one of whom was instructing the other as to the best way to manage a husband. After informing her that: "Sunt enim fœminæ quædam tam morosæ vt in ipso etiam coitu querantur et rixentur," she proceeds to tell her that if she could present her husband with a son it would help to smooth matters over between them. The wife informs her that she has already done so.

Eulalia. When was this?

Xantippe. Some time ago.

Eu. How many months ago?

Xa. Almost seven. . . . Imo ante nuptias fuerat mihi cum eo colloquium.

Eu. An ex colloquio nascuntur pueri?

Xa. Forte solam nactus cœpit alludere, titillans axillas ac latera quo me prouocaret ad risum. Ego, non ferens titillationem, me resupinabam in lectum; ille incumbens figebat oscula, nec satis scio quid egerit præterea; certe paucis post diebus vterus cœpit intumescere.

Eu. I nunc et maritum contemne, qui si lusitans gignit liberos, quid faciet cum serio rem aget?

Xa. Suspicor et nunc me grauidam esse.

Eu. Euge, contigit felici fundo bonus cultor!

There is much more of the same kind, but already we feel some uneasiness on the score of propriety in admitting to these pages the little we have already quoted. That Erasmus or anyone could write such a book for the purpose of teaching boys Latin argues a mind as far removed from spiritual influences as it is possible to have it, and

fully justifies Luther's judgment of him already quoted, namely, that "He does not sufficiently promote the work of Christ nor the grace of God, of which he is by far more ignorant than Faber Stapulensis: the human predominates in him over the divine." It would seem that the men who praise the *Colloquies* may be divided into two classes—those who have never read them closely, and those who, having read them, feel that Erasmus is too great to be subjected to those rules of criticism which are applied to lesser men. From neither of these classes can we glean a just estimate of the work, and, as a consequence, their claims had better be discounted. Of this latter class was Jortin, who speaks of the work as follows:

> He composed this work, partly that young persons might have a book to teach them the Latin language, and religious and moral sentiments at the same time; and partly, without question, to cure the bigotted world, if he could, of that superstitious devotion which the monks inculcated more sedulously than true christian piety.[4]

As a book to teach boys Latin it was excellent; but as a work to teach them "religious and moral sentiments" it was a stupendous failure, unless obscenity can accomplish this on the principle of *"lucus a non lucendo."* Jortin is certainly a curious critic, for, whereas he praises the book unstintedly in some places, he is not backward in adducing testimony which goes far towards nullifying everything he says in that regard. He quotes, for instance, Vigneul-Marville, who says that these colloquies are "too free," and brings forward the anecdote of the Duke of Ossuna, as related by his biographer Leti, to the effect that "this nobleman was spoiled in his youth by reading the colloquies of Erasmus." [5] He also reminds us that the Faculty of Theology of the University of Paris in 1526 " 'decreed that the perusal of this wicked book be forbidden to all, more especially to young folks; and that it be entirely suppressed, if it be possible.' " [6] The fact that Jortin was a Doctor of Divinity must have made him at least circumspect in his admiration for this far from edifying book, and his soul must have been torn between his love for Erasmus and his sense of the proprieties to be observed by a divine of his standing. It is true that he informs us of the Provincial Council of Cologne held in 1549, which " 'condemned the Colloquies, as not fit to be read in schools.' " [7] But it goes against his grain to be forced to tell these things, as we can see in his account of the action of Pope Paul III in 1537, when that Pontiff had chosen a number of learned prelates to consider about the reformation of morals. He admits that these Cardinals and prelates "gave him their answer, containing some proposals which were honest and reasonable enough;" but adds "but they fell upon the Colloquies of poor Erasmus, and advised that young people should not be permitted to learn them at school." [8]

One could hardly conceive for a moment that John Colet, for instance,

[4] *Erasmus*, Vol. I, p. 270.
[5] *Ibid.*, p. 271.
[6] *Ibid.*, pp. 272, 273.
[7] *Ibid.*, p. 273.
[8] *Idem.*

would have put such a book into the hands of his beloved boys, for his sense of purity was that of the saints. Chastity in thought, word, and deed, was his rule of life; and so high an estimate did he put on absolute purity that he would only countenance marriage for others as a concession to human weakness, and because it was absolutely necessary for the propagation of the species. That for these reasons he would have condemned Erasmus' smutty *Colloquies* we may rest assured, although as Colet had passed from earth before the controversy excited by the work became acute, he had no chance to express his disapprobation. Sir Thomas More did make a half-hearted attempt to justify the *Praise of Folly,* as it had been dedicated to him, but we notice not a syllable from him in extenuation of the *Colloquies.* Erasmus had loose ways of thinking in the matter of morals, which were more liberal than those of his contemporaries. This same thought seems to have occurred to Motley when he says, "Erasmus was a shrewd satirist, but a moderate moralist." [9] Yet in spite of the lamentable degradation of his pen in the *Colloquies* and elsewhere, he did not hesitate to write to Cardinal Wolsey about this very time, and tell him: "One thing I have always seen to, that nothing should emanate from me that by its obscenity might corrupt youth." [10]

Yet it was only four months previously that he had written the preface to the *Colloquies,* and at that very moment the unclean work was on its way to England. The man's unconscious unmorality is amazing. The reception which the work met in England was unfavorable; for, besides its reputation for unpardonable coarseness, it fell under the suspicion of being not entirely free from heretical tendencies. A celebrated preacher, whose name he does not give us, assailed him on the score of his *New Testament,* and also on that of his *Colloquies,* and very soon all England had him under discussion. This was the last thing in the world that he desired, for he realized his own vulnerability. Thus he was his own worst enemy, for no sooner had he established himself in the good graces of the bishops and other prelates of the Church than in a careless moment he would say or write something which was calculated to alienate from him a multitude of his well-wishers, besides furnishing sure and convincing proofs to his adversaries that he was just what they declared him to be, a dangerous man. That Dole and Paris and Cologne and even Rome should condemn his *Colloquies* was not so disastrous to him personally as that the work should alienate from him his English friends, and this must be avoided at any cost. Hence he again writes to Cardinal Wolsey, when the contest over his orthodoxy had lasted several years, and assures him that:

> There is nothing in my *Colloquies* which is either obscene, or impious, or seditious.[11] Many things there are in them which it

[9] *Rise of the Dutch Republic,* Vol. I, p. 73. Harper.

[10] Eras. Ep. 967, ll. 182-183.

[11] Allen, in his notes to the letters of Erasmus, comments several times on Erasmus' self-deception with regard to the effects of his own writings, instancing particularly his assertion to Pope Leo X that "so far no man has been made a hair the worse by any writing of mine, none less pious, nor has any trouble originated on my account, nor will." (Eras. Ep. 1007, note.)

is well that the young should know, so that they may not rashly precipitate themselves into a sort of life from which they cannot free themselves; also that they may not go visiting St. James of Compostella, leaving behind their wives and children who depend on them for their care, and many other things too numerous to recount which the priests themselves in their sermons should point out to them. Such is the variety of human minds that perhaps something which was said by way of a joke might prove displeasing to the crabbed and make the morose suspicious; but against the calumnies of such persons there is no defense. Some may say that it is unbecoming in an elderly man like me to indulge in such levity; but the ancient writers are praised for lowering themselves to the level of stammering boys in order to attract them to learning. Let your Eminence commit my book to be read over by some one who understands Latin and Greek—I will not say Thomas More or Cuthbert Tunstall, for they are my personal friends, although both of them are the kind of friends to Erasmus that would not sacrifice the truth for my sake—but let it be to anyone who is not notably for or against me. If any impiety is detected therein, let it be snatched from the young with my full consent; but if lighter defects offend them, let such things be corrected according to the judgment of good men, so that the usefulness of the book may be of profit to the young.[12]

So we may perceive that not even at that late day could he realize that the tone of his work was essentially lewd in parts, and that it was unfit for circulation amongst the young. This moral obliquity in Erasmus is astonishing, and can only be explained on the theory that he was born with a moral strabismus. As far as we can see Wolsey deigned him no reply, for we may feel sure that if the Cardinal had accepted his explanations Erasmus would have been only too happy to have preserved such a document for the enlightenment and confusion of his adversaries. A year or more after this he was still striving to explain away his unlucky *Colloquies* in a long espistle to Robert Aldridge, one of his Cambridge acquaintances who was afterwards a canon at Windsor, and eventually Bishop of Carlisle. But we look in vain for any word of praise or commendation for this work from either Warham, Wolsey, Pace, Aldridge, or More. His English friends seem to have lost some of the warmth and cordiality of their regard for him; and although Mountjoy, Warham, and probably others, continued still to fulfill their financial promises towards him, he was never again to stand in their affections as he had in the past. Those who still clung to him, like More, for instance, did so not on account of, but in spite of, his faults. As for Bishop Fisher, who had stood by him valiantly up to this, the *Colloquies* disgusted him completely. He criticized them unsparingly, charging them with being obscene, and tending to lessen the reverence for holy things, which is so easily brought about. He asked him to imitate St. Augustine, who did not hesitate to make a

[12] Eras. Ep. (LB) col. 930E-931A.

retraction of every error that was pointed out to him. But Erasmus was not St. Augustine, for in a lengthy letter he essayed to make Fisher doubt the evidence of his own eyes. Even Jortin calls this letter "artful and eloquent"; but in spite of all his artfulness and eloquence Erasmus could not move Fisher from the stand he had taken on the *Colloquies*. We will reproduce a few paragraphs of his attempted defense:

> As for the passages you allege are objected to by those people, I would answer simply that there is nothing of that nature in my *Colloquies,* nor are boys made any the worse by reading them. But those are the comments of a few who, you might say, have been born for no other purpose than to spread calumny. Yet I am not willing to be hurried on to abuse of their Order. But in human affairs there is no body which does not have its particular ulcers. Hitherto they have exercised their tyranny on raw youths and palpable dunces; now it irritates them that the young are learning something which they themselves do not know. Hence these tears. In my *Colloquies,* so far is there from being anything obscene or lewd that they even treat chastely those things which are lewd by nature, as for instance, in the colloquies of "The Youth and the Maiden," and "The Youth and the Harlot"; and I consider that I have paid particular attention to it that tender youth shall derive nothing lewd from my writings.[13]

It is evident that he was incorrigible, and that "e'en though vanquished, he could argue still." But it was not alone his obscenity that was objected to, for his blind and mortal hatred of the monks so evident in the *Colloquies* was equally regretted. Juan Maldonado, one of the Imperial Councillors and a near friend of his, wrote to him deprecating the quarrel which existed between him and his monastic brethren, and advising him to make friends with them again.

> Not to conceal from you my regard, I am extremely anxious that you make friends again with the monks and, having resumed your pen, so show them what your intention has been that those amongst them who excel in character and learning (for there are very many of them worthy to be listened to by the rest) may perceive that you are naturally actuated by a desire to instruct them and not to abuse them, that you are wont to criticize those of any Order, some of whom, having abandoned the paths of their predecessors and having been carried away by the pleasures of the senses, deem that they are sufficiently performing their duty to their Order to which they belong if they imitate their masters in their dress.[14]

But Maldonado was only wasting his time, for this monachophobia was now a part of Erasmus' very fibre, grafted on to his very nature, and not to be separated from him any more than his right arm. He persisted in saying that his *Colloquies* were harmless, and that the monks deserved more than he was giving them. It is only when he thought

[13] *Ibid.*, col. 1099B.

[14] Eras. Ep. 1742, ll. 183-91.

of his friends in England that he at all moderated his tone. He must not wound the gentle soul of Archbishop Warham, and he can almost see the kindly prelate's surprised and reproachful look. For a fleeting moment his conscience pricks him, and he writes to the Archbishop to try to reassure him: "Grant," he says, "that there are things in my books which might have been expressed more circumspectly; of a surety they can show you nothing impious." And a few lines further on: "They are railing at my *Colloquies* over there, although there is scarcely another book more conducible to the banishing from the minds of men opinions about silly things." [15]

Augustine Steuchus, a celebrated divine and exceptional scholar, attempted the useless task of mildly expostulating with him and giving him some good advice, but it was wasted effort and served only to exasperate him. A few sentences from the letter of Steuchus will suffice:

> I believe you do not condemn sanctity itself, but only superstition and ignorance. But many say that you ought to have done it more temperately and in a better way. For what was the use of attacking, for instance, the defects of certain people, as you did in your *Colloquies?* How many noxious drafts you gave them to drink? How many fountains of blasphemy you opened up? Is that your prudence, Erasmus, O most worthy censor? If you deem that anyone has in some way detracted from your fame, the smart thereof pierces to the very bottom of your heart, and you prepare your refutations and responses. And do you not think that others feel the smart when you defame them so cruelly? "The name of a whole people must be reflected on very gently," you say. How do you observe that rule, you who, to reach one or two, blast the reputation of a whole Order? . . . Many also wonder why, at your time of life, you insidiously inject into your *Colloquies,* which in other ways are full of your eloquence and acumen, so many wicked things. Now, I am not defending the lives or manners of lazy or superstitious monks; but I say that there is a better way to redress these evils than by exposing the offendings of a few individuals to be gazed at and noted by the public. . . . I maintain, Erasmus, that many things in your books have hitherto displeased me, especially those things which have bred up for us many contemners of sacred matters.[16]

Swift once said, "We have just enough religion to make us hate, but not enough to make us love, one another." [17] This would seem to be true of Erasmus, who lost no opportunity of fleshing his hatreds and satisfying his grudges, totally regardless of the effect such action on his part might have on the welfare of the Church at large. Apparently unconscious of the bitter and uncharitable feelings he was exciting in those he attacked, and the gaping and deadly wounds he was inflicting with his own hand on the Church of Christ, he either would not or

[15] Eras. Ep. (LB) col. 1052.
[16] *Ibid.*, col. 1926.
[17] *Thoughts on Various Subjects.*

could not realize what scandal he was giving to the young. And this disastrous effect he was unwittingly accomplishing, not because he was attacking the monks, not because he was ridiculing fasting and abstinence, not because he was throwing contempt on the religious habits and superstitions of the people, nor because he was making the ceremonial of the Church a subject for jest, but because by these things he was bringing about something which he himself did not foresee, the abolishing of all reverence, and the questioning of all authority, civil as well as ecclesiastical. He could not see this, but Luther saw it clearly.

This letter of Steuchus is perhaps one of the most important in the whole correspondence. Erasmus answered it, but he no longer tried to defend the *Colloquies*. This was 1531, and his ideas were changing.

CHAPTER X

HUTTEN'S ATTEMPT TO FORCE ERASMUS TO TAKE POSITION; PRIVATE CONCLAVE ON LUTHER: ERASMUS' LOST OPPORTUNITY; LUTHER BEFORE THE DIET OF WORMS.

In our account of the *Colloquies* we have been again led to anticipate the natural order of events, and must now go back to Erasmus at the moment when he was being urged to champion Luther. At first he had spoken well of him. Answering a letter of Melancthon in which the latter tried to elicit from him an expression of his opinion on Luther, he says: "With us [at Louvain] everyone praises the life of Martin Luther, but about his sentiments there are varying opinions. . . . Some things he has criticized wisely; but would that he had been as happy as he has been bold!" [1]

So far he had conducted himself with consummate skill in most difficult circumstances, and had made excellent capital out of the mistakes and weaknesses of his opponents. Writing to Albert Cardinal-Archbishop of Mainz and Imperial Elector, Erasmus does not hesitate to uphold Luther, but aims at the same time to give the impression that he himself was speaking from a totally disinterested standpoint, which was far from true. Luther had so far fought the fight against Rome with ammunition borrowed from the armory of Erasmus; but strangely enough, while the older and more wily man plainly perceived that he was being drawn upon in this way and rejoiced thereat, the younger man seemed quite oblivious of his source of supply. In spite of himself, Luther's soul had been perverted by the cynicism and lack of sincerity of Erasmus. Erasmus had sowed the wind; soon the world would reap the whirlwind. This is how Erasmus puts his own personal attitude towards Luther before the Archbishop of Mainz:

> About those propositions of Luther's to which they object, I make no question at present; what I do question, however, are the method and the occasion adopted. Luther has dared to cast doubts on *indulgences;* but others before him have made exceedingly rash statements about them. He has had the temerity to speak somewhat moderately about the power of the Roman Pontiff, but others had previously written of it in extravagant terms, of whom the principal writers were the three Dominicans: Alvarus, Sylvester, and the Cardinal of St. Sixtus. He has been so bold as to contemn the conclusions of St. Thomas, which, however, the Dominicans esteem almost more than the four Gospels. He has presumed to raise some scruples about the matter of Confession, a subject

[1] Eras. Ep. 947.

which the monks use perpetually for entangling the consciences of men. He has not hesitated in a measure to cast aside the judgments of the Schoolmen, to which these latter attach too much importance, although they are not in exact accord about them, for they change them eventually, introducing new ones to take the place of the old.

It has distressed pious minds to hear in the universities scarcely a single discourse about the doctrine of the Gospel, to see those sacred authors so long approved by the Church now considered antiquated, to hear in sermons very little about Christ, but a great deal about the power of the Pope, and the opinions of recent writers thereon. Every discourse openly manifests self-interest, flattery, ambition, and pretence. Even though Luther has written somewhat intemperately, I think that the blame should rest on these very happenings. Whoever favors the doctrine of the Gospel favors the Roman Pontiff, who is the chief herald thereof, although the rest of the bishops are also likewise heralds. All the bishops act in the place of Christ, but among these the Roman Pontiff is preëminent. Of him we must have this feeling: that he desires nothing but the glory of Christ, whose servant he glories in being. They merit very little consideration who ascribe to him through flattery what he himself does not claim and what is not necessary for his Christian flock. And yet some who are causing these tumults are not doing it from zeal for the Pontiff, but are abusing his power for their own enrichment and unjust domination. We have, in my opinion, a pious Pontiff; but in these tempestuous times there are many things of which he is not aware, many things also which even if he wished to do so he could not control, but as Maro says:

Fertur equis auriga, neque audit currus habenas.

He therefore aids the pious endeavors of the Pontiff who exhorts him to the doing of those things which are especially worthy of Christ. It is evident that there are some who incite his Holiness against Luther, nay, against all who dare to murmur a syllable against their dogmas. But great princes like yourself should consider what the constant good will of the Pontiff indicates rather than some favor obtained of him by underhand means. . . .

Luther has written much that was imprudent rather than impious, of which the worst in their estimation is that he pays little tribute to Thomas, that he lessens the profits from the *indulgences,* that he shows small regard for the Mendicant Orders, that he defers less to the dogmas of the Schools than to the Gospels, and that he pays no regard to the crafty subtleties of human disputants.[2]

Allowing for his usual exaggeration in asserting that the Dominicans thought almost more of St. Thomas than of the Gospel, and that in the universities Christ was seldom spoken of, Erasmus has here yielded to Melancthon's plea for some moral support in behalf of Luther, and has

[2] *Ibid.,* 1033, ll. 140-79, 221-6.

treated the rising reformer rather handsomely in this letter to the Cardinal-Elector. But party feeling was now running very high, and every man's utterances were being carefully scanned in order that from them his position for or against either side might be gleaned.

Ulrich Hutten, a sort of free lance in the political, religious, and social circles of those days, was at this time attached to the court of the Cardinal-Archbishop as one of his secretaries, and to him Erasmus had entrusted the above letter. Hutten, who was a restless and uneasy spirit with a witty and attractive literary gift, and with ambitions and ideals which were not then attainable, half Bayard and half Don Quixote, took Erasmus' letter and, to the latter's supreme dismay, proceeded to print and scatter broadcast copies of it for the effect it might have in bringing recruits to Luther's standard. Now to speak well of Luther in private and to select ears was one thing; but to be thus openly thrust forward by Hutten as the champion of Luther, who was at that very moment under the ban of excommunication, was quite another matter entirely, and probably caused Erasmus considerable anxiety in thus seeing his hand forced. He thus writes to Cardinal-Elector:

> I regret the publication of the letter which I wrote to your Eminence about Luther. I certainly wrote it with good intentions, but assuredly not for publication. I gave out no copy of it. I enclosed it with other letters to Hutten, telling him that if he deemed it expedient he was to hand it to you at the proper moment, but if not, it was to be suppressed or destroyed. What makes me wonder all the more is, at whose suggestion it was given to the printers without being handed to you. If this was an accident, it was most unlucky; but if it was treachery, it was more than Punic.[3]

He was tremendously angry with Hutten for what he deemed an attempt to ally him openly with Luther, and thus to show the world where he stood. This very thing had been going on for the last two years, Luther's friends trying to smoke out the great humanist into the open where he would have to declare himself, and Erasmus, like the seasoned fox that he was, striving his utmost to defeat such a measure. He even went so far as to accuse Hutten of tampering with the wording of the letter to the extent of inserting the word "our" before the name of Luther, in order to give to the world a better idea of the intimacy of the relation in which Erasmus stood with regard to Luther.[4]

He had planted a sowing, the harvest of which he did not want to be forced to acknowledge. Never was there a truer saying than that which alleged that Erasmus had laid the egg which Luther hatched. He

[3] *Ibid.*, 1152.

[4] *Ibid.*, 1155, 1217. (With his thorough and indefatigable acumen, it occurred to Allen, in editing the two letters mentioned above for his admirable edition of the Erasmus epistles, to examine all the contemporary copies of them that he could consult, and in no instance was he able to find the "our" interpolated. With all his faults Hutten was a man of honor, as personal honor was understood by the knights of the Middle Ages. Moreover, Erasmus is careful to pass the onus of the charge on to the shoulders of others by saying indefinitely, "I hear" or "They say" that Hutten did thus and so, etc.)

had ploughed the ground, and sowed the seed, and nurtured the crop, until now it was ready to mature. Soon he was to realize that the seed he had planted was not wholly good. Luther was one of the first fruits; a second was Ulrich Hutten of whom we have already spoken; and a third was Frederick, Elector of Saxony, who was Luther's patron and protector during the stormy times then at hand. A fourth was George Spalatin, the secretary of the aforesaid Frederick, his constant adviser and mentor, and the mutual confidant and intermediary between Luther and his royal patron.[5] To show that the Elector had been exposed to the influence of Erasmus' peculiar and, at this time, unusual sentiments, we will subjoin a letter from Spalatin to Erasmus, from which we learn indubitably that the monarch was an admirer of Erasmus' works:

> George Spalatin to Erasmus of Rotterdam, Greeting. I have long been awaiting a letter from you, Erasmus, sole glory of our common fatherland Germany. If my letter has reached your hands there is nothing I less fear than that you will not send me a reply; because I have written to you not so much in a private as in a public capacity, although most willingly too on my own account. For having long ago sought a reason for writing to you, I did not meet with such an occasion, though most desirous, until the present one fell out and compelled me thereto. I began to be wholly yours from the time when I first penetrated into the stores of your manifold erudition and eloquence. I am extremely desirous of knowing where you now are, what you are doing and what meditating, what you are preparing for our own times, and what for the times to come. I hope, therefore, you will grant me this in the name of my best of kings, Duke Frederick of Saxony, Elector of the Holy Roman Empire, and send me at length a reply. Great as he is, he holds you in the highest estimation, and has all your books in his library which he is building up by the acquisition of the very best sort of works. Our Peter Alamirus will tell you the rest. Farewell and be happy. Hastily, from the castle of Aldenburg. November 13, 1517.[6]

This letter was lost in transit, so that Erasmus did not receive it, as he says, until about two years afterwards, at about the same period that he had written to the other Elector, Albert Archbishop of Mainz. After excusing himself to Spalatin for his long delay in answering, he dexterously conveys the information that Albert has made him a very rich present, which he values all the more on account of its having been unsolicited. Such a hint could not be passed unnoticed by Spalatin,

[5] So great an admirer of Erasmus was Spalatin that he was already at work in 1520 on a German translation of the great scholar's *Institutio principis christiani*, presumably for the benefit of his master Frederick the Elector, who is said to have known little or no Latin. I have seen a copy of this now scarce book, which is entitled *Erasmus von Rotterdam, Die vnterweysung eines Frummen u. Christlichen Fürsten. . . durch G. Spalatin geteutscht.* Augsp. Sig. Grym u. M. Wirsung, 1521.

[6] Eras. Ep. 711.

and in his next letter to Erasmus he announces that the Elector has bestowed on him two medals, one of silver and one of gold, bearing engraved thereon the royal lineaments. This was no inconsiderable present, and for it Erasmus was duly grateful. It is possible that Frederick had made him other gifts previously, since he intimates as much to Spalatin in his letter of thanks, when he says, "I owe him very much privately"; but he was not going to make the same mistake with Frederick that he had made with the Cardinal Albert, of writing him a letter about his protegé Luther that he, or some one for him, might print, to the detriment of Erasmus' standing with the powerful opponents of Luther. So he very guardedly says to Spalatin:

> I have written recently to Philip Melancthon, but in such a manner that I feel as if I had written to Luther by that same letter. I pray that Christ the Almighty will so temper the pen and mind of Luther that he will procure for evangelical piety the greatest possible amount of good, and that he will give to certain people a better understanding, people who seek their own glory by the ignominy of Christ, and follow their own profit by abandoning Him. In the camp of those who oppose Luther I perceive many who smack of the world more than of Christ. And yet there are faults on both sides. Would that Hutten, whose talents I much esteem, would moderate his writing! I should prefer Luther to refrain from these contentions for a little while, and to expound the Gospel simply, without admixture of personal feelings: perhaps his undertaking would succeed better. Just now he is exposing even good literature to an ill will which is ruinous to us and unprofitable to himself. And there is danger that the corruption of public morality, which all declare requires a public remedy, may, like a pestilence that is stirred up afresh, wax ever more strongly. Not always is the truth to be put forth. And it makes a wide difference in what manner it is put forth. Farewell, best of men, and commend me to your prince. Louvain, July 6, 1520.[7]

Here we have the famous axiom by which he ruled his own conduct, that "the truth is not always to be spoken." Luther had now been in open revolt against the Church authorities for almost three years, and Erasmus was beginning to scent real danger ahead. Neither he nor any other man had ever imagined for a moment that Luther would carry things so far or with so high a hand. But it was against him and not Luther that the monks were now collecting ample evidence of destructive influences; influences which he had let loose and for which they were going to hold him responsible. This served to make him still more careful of his utterances about Luther; besides this, he had long been aware that those who were the staunchest champions of the Church—and they were not solely the monks, but the earnest and zealous minds of all countries—had begun to look askance at the humanists as being men of loose and irreverent sentiments towards the Church. This was an unfortunate but very natural conclusion for them to draw, seeing

[7] *Ibid.*, 1119.

that Erasmus, the greatest scholar of all these, was, either consciously or unconsciously, leading a large number of the humanists into the most pronounced latitudinarianism in matters of religious belief. But the strange part of it all is that he did not yet perceive that he was largely responsible for the tragedy that was being enacted before his very eyes. And so, in the following letter to Reuchlin, he looks for a consolation which he has not earned:

> When I was dining recently with the reverend Cardinal of Sion, he informed me that you were dead. I did not choose to believe it because it had not been verified by letter. But soon others brought me more joyous tidings, for which I pray a continuance, my best and most learned of friends. You see the fatal tragedy which is now being enacted and of which the end is uncertain. Whatever may be the outcome, I pray that it may be to the glory of Christ and the benefit of evangelical truth. I prefer to be a spectator of this affair rather than an actor therein; not that I would refuse to endure any trial for the work of Christ, but that I perceive the affair to be beyond my poor abilities. . . . It was ever my care to keep your cause and the cause of polite literature separate from that of Luther, for the reason that such a confusing of aims would invite hostility towards us, and help him not at all. . . . If our Germans had only practiced politeness, for which I have always striven, the matter might perhaps never have ended in such tumults. November 8, 1520.[8]

His every letter of this time is full of mournful apprehension for what may happen to the cause of learning; but as to the havoc that was being wrought in men's religious convictions, we look in vain for the slightest expression of regret. But, if he was blind to the results of his many years of scoffing and irreverence, others were not; and he began to observe an unwonted coldness even amongst his German friends. Something of this feeling prompted him to send the letter to Reuchlin from which we have just quoted, in order to reinstate himself at least in that great scholar's regard. Reuchlin had fallen out with his nephew Melancthon on account of Luther, and it is just probable that Erasmus' conscience did not entirely acquit him of a share in the responsibility for Melancthon's going over to the Wittemberg monk. Whether or not this surmise is correct, the fact remains that Reuchlin chose to ignore the letter, so far as we can see, nor was there any further correspondence between them until Reuchlin's death, which occurred three years later.

Brilliant as was the mind of Erasmus in many ways, his was not an analytical mind, or he would have been better able to relate cause with effect. Writing to Gerard Geldenhauer as to how the troubles with Luther had arisen, he gives this most lame and impotent conclusion, "This tragedy first arose from hatred to good literature, and from the stupidity of the monks." [9] That is his sole explanation of the Reformation, and is as usual purely personal and subjective. That this stupendous

[8] *Ibid.*, 1155.

[9] *Ibid*, 1141. (September 9, 1520.)

movement originated in any causes unconnected with his favorite obsessions was evidently never considered possible by him. It was very gratifying for him to see, as a result more of his efforts than of those of anyone else, that the monastic institution had been shaken to its very centre; but his satisfaction thereat was somewhat diminished by the knowledge that advanced scholarship was being made to suffer for this vicariously. And though this was unjust, as we now perceive, it seems very natural when we reflect that almost all these attacks on the monastic institution were being made by the leading exponents of the New Learning. But there was injustice on both sides, for we must remember that, had it not been for the monastic institution in the first place, all the stores of classic antiquity on which the New Learning was expending its energy and acumen would have perished utterly from the world.

The Elector Frederick "the Wise," defender of Luther against his enemies, entertained, as we have previously said, a high regard for the opinions of Erasmus. At times he must have had his doubts as to the wisdom of supporting his turbulent and truculent protégé against the constituted Church authorities; and we get a glimpse of his mental anxiety in his famous meeting with Erasmus at Cologne about this time. Spalatin, who was present at the interview between the monarch and the great scholar, relates that Frederick asked Erasmus if he considered Luther to have erred in his published opinions. What a glorious chance was there offered to Erasmus to settle matters amicably by assisting the Elector to orient himself! Probably no other man then living could have done what he might have done with a few earnest and thoughtful words. What tremendous consequences rested on his answer only the future could disclose—the Church of God rent asunder, the peasant uprising in Germany, the torrents of blood shed under Henry, Mary, and Elizabeth, in England, the baleful fires of Smithfield and Geneva, the day of St. Bartholomew in France, the hatreds of kindred, the fearful injustices everywhere perpetrated in the name of the new liberty, and worst of all, the Thirty Years' War, of that duration merely because it left Europe too flatly prostrate to fight longer. Had Erasmus only risen to the occasion with the warnings which he boasted in later years he so often gave at this period! But Erasmus was not the man for such a decisive position. As a constructive thinker he was humanly impregnable only when he hypnotized by the awe of his ivory tower; and only those held his opinions on contemporary affairs in high account who confused erudition with original thinking—a not uncommon confusion at that period. Quotations from the classics are not oracles: they are quotations from the classics. When Erasmus attempted serious counsel, he was often platitudinous and banal, as witness the plan he with preliminary trumpetings offered to Pope Adrian VI; on the other hand, his nearest approach to brilliant thinking was usually a sparkling but little helpful epigram. In this case he acted in the latter way. The man who had so eagerly and so ardently pleaded for peace at all times and on every occasion, sacrificed the peace of Europe for a witticism. We translate the account of this famous

THE LOST OPPORTUNITY:
ERASMUS BEFORE THE ELECTOR FREDERICK AT COLOGNE

meeting from Seckendorf,[10] who gives a Latin version of Spalatin's own German report from a manuscript of 1520.

> When Emperor Charles V, having been crowned at Aix, arrived in Cologne, the Elector Frederick caused Erasmus to be earnestly bidden to come to him at his lodgings, which were in the Forum of the Three Kings. And so he came on the fifth of December,[11] and standing before the fire-place with the Prince, Spalatin being present, began to converse with him. The Elector desired that Erasmus should speak in his own language, that is, Belgian,[12] but he preferred to use Latin; this the Prince understood, but replied through Spalatin. He then tells that the Elector sought the opinion of Erasmus concerning Luther; Erasmus (he says), first closing his lips with a smack, and hesitating, put off his reply. The Elector, as he had the custom of doing if he were engaged with some serious matter, regarded him with wide-open eyes, gravely; then Erasmus burst forth in these words: "Luther has sinned in two things: namely, because he has touched the Pontiff's crown and the monks' bellies." In the *Commentary on the Elector Frederick,* almost the same thing is told, with this addition, that Frederick laughed slightly when Erasmus said this, and recalled the very statement just before his death. In the *History* it is noted that Erasmus at that time thought so highly of Luther's doctrine that, when Spalatin took him, leaving the Elector, to the home of . . . Count Neuenahr . . . feeling very daring, he immediately wrote out "axioms," [13] as he called them, and gave them to Spalatin. . . . But soon he begged Spalatin in a letter to give them back to him, lest they should injure him with Aleander.[14]

Jortin and others, basing their information probably on a hearsay report of this meeting written long afterwards by Philip Melancthon,[15] held that Erasmus first told these orally to Frederick, and then wrote them down later. This is dubious even in Melanchon.[16] The account of the eyewitness Spalatin is probably rather to be trusted. That there was further talk on the matter between the Elector and Erasmus seems likely, but it was probably less to the point than these *axiomata,* with Erasmus, as Professor Smith phrases it, "satisfied with having planted the perfect epigram," pursuing his usual evasive tactics and offering wit in place of matter. Luther gives a similar account long afterwards in his *Table-Talk.* Although the witty remark made the Elector laugh, it

[10] *Commentarius historicus et apologeticus de Lutheranismo,* I, sec. 34, § lxxxi, (6), (p. 125 in 1692 edition).

[11] Seckendorf is mistaken as to the date. *Cf.* in *Friedrichs des Weisen Leben und Zeitgeschichte, von George Spalatin,* p. 164. Jena, 1851.

[12] Dutch.

[13] Given in *D. Martini Lutheri opera latina varii argumenti ad reformationis historiam pertinentia,* ed. Heinrich Schmidt, Vol. V, pp. 236-42. Frankfurt, 1868. *Cf.* Jortin, *op. cit.,* Vol. I, pp. 221, 222. Seen in this present work p. 180 of Vol. II.

[14] See p. 181 of Vol. II.

[15] *Chronicon Carionis,* Lib. V, fols. 704, 705.

[16] "Postea pertexuit suam sententiam, et dixit, etc." This might or might not have been orally. Quoted in Seckendorf, *idem* (8) (p. 126 in 1692 edition).

may be surmised that it was hardly accepted in lieu of solid advice, for Luther goes on to inform us that Frederick at the next meeting said to Spalatin: "What kind of a man is Erasmus? one can never tell where one stands with him." And Duke George of Saxony, the Elector's cousin, exclaimed testily on another occasion: "Plague take him, one never knows what he is at!"

In this matter, as in all others, Erasmus wished to speak occasionally, when it occurred to him, *ex cathedra,* as it were; but he grew irritated if, the inconsistency of his various remarks being flung in his face, he were forced to weave these diverse and hasty statements into a presentably consistent fabric of opinion. If at that solemn moment Erasmus had only given to Frederick the same common-sense advice he gave to Cardinal Campegio: "Whatever sort of man Luther might be, it would certainly be more humane to cure him than to destroy him."[17] If he only said to the Elector what he said shortly afterwards to Jodocus Jonas:

> I marvel much, dear Jonas, what god has distracted the mind of Luther than he inveighs with such licence against the Roman Pontiff, against all the universities, against philosophy, and against the Mendicant Orders. Even though everything he said were true, which those writers who have censured his writings declare to be far from the fact, what other result can we expect than that which we now see, since he has provoked so many? . . . For since the truth may be disagreeable to many, and since the shattering of belief in things sanctioned by long usage may in itself be seditious, he had been much wiser to have softened a thing naturally harsh by a gentle manner of treating it, rather than to add hatred to hatred. What benefit could be obtained by dealing in novel ideas, and so presenting certain things that they offended at the first glance much more than when observed close to? . . . What profit could he secure by reveling in savage invectives against those people, that even if he wished to cure them we should have to call him imprudent, but if he desired to provoke them by doing injury to the whole world, we should have to call him wicked. May 10, 1521.[18]

If it were not so serious a matter, it might provoke a smile to see Erasmus censuring the freedoms which Luther had taken with the Pope, with the Schoolmen, and with the monks, as if he had reserved to himself all rights in that province. But as biographers it is not our duty to point out what he might have done to prevent what followed, but to show what his own actions and their consequences really were.

Luther had been summoned, on August 7, 1518, to appear for trial at Rome within sixty days. As Sylvester Prierias, who had already written against him, was appointed one of the judges for this trial, Luther felt, and with some justification, that the case would surely go against him; so he appealed to the Elector to have the case tried in Germany instead. As it happened, the Imperial German Diet was just then sitting at Augsburg, at which the Emperor Maximilian, the Elector

[17] Eras. Ep. 1167. (December, 1520.) [18] *Ibid.,* 1202.

Frederick, and the other Electors and crowned heads of the Empire were present, together with Cardinal Cajetan, the Pope's envoy. On receipt of Luther's request, the Elector Frederick at once hastened to use his influence with the Emperor and the Papal Legate to the end that Luther might be tried in Germany instead of Rome. Frederick had his full share of the Teuton antipathy against the able but crafty Italians who constituted the Roman Curia at that time, and was loath to deliver up his subject into their hands. So, as would appear from one of Luther's letters to Lange, Frederick at length persuaded Cajetan to write to Rome for the necessary permission. However, from other sources we learn that Cajetan did not wait for word from Rome, but proceeded to summon Luther to appear before him at Augsburg at the close of the Diet. German craft was now pitted against Italian craft to hinder Luther from falling into the hands of the Roman Curia. Even before Frederick had acted in the matter at all, Luther and his friends had put their heads together in order to outwit Rome. Writing to Spalatin two weeks after he had received his summons to Rome, Luther tells him:

> It seems best to our learned and prudent friends here that I should ask the Elector Frederick for a so-called safe-conduct through his dominions. When he shall have refused it, as I know he will, this will be a most excellent reason and excuse for not appearing at Rome.[19]

This was a masterly stroke, and served the purpose of informing the Church authorities that in disciplining Luther they had first to reckon with his sovereign. This was probably the reason why Cajetan took it upon himself to grant Luther a trial in Germany, irrespective of the desires of the Roman Curia. Besides, he was an able theologian and felt no doubt that he could overcome a simple but obstinate monk. His confidence in his ability in this regard was shared by many of the Germans, for we read of a monk of Weimar named John Kestner who met Luther on his way to Augsburg and with great solicitude exclaimed, "My dear doctor, the Italians are very learned people. I fear you will not be able to gain your cause with them, and they will put you to the flames."[20]

This racial antipathy was frequently cropping up to mar good counsel. On Luther's arrival at Augsburg, and before Cajetan had seen him, he was visited by the orator of Montferrat, who, "with many words, and, as he saith, 'judicious counsels,' . . . endeavoured to persuade me to submit forthwith to the legate, and to return to the church by recanting my hard speeches. . . . To be short, he is an Italian, and will always be an Italian."[21] It is to the credit of the Roman Curia that they recognized this racial hostility as possibly entering to prevent a mutually satisfactory settlement of the difficulties now existing between the Church government, on the one hand, and Luther backed up by his

[19] De Wette, *Luthers Briefe,* Vol. I, p. 133.
[20] Sears, *Life of Luther,* p. 234.
[21] *Ibid.,* p. 236.

hereditary prince, on the other; for, on observing the failure of Cajetan to bridge over the trouble amicably, they chose for the difficult task this time a fellow-countryman of Luther's own, Carl von Miltitz, who was a papal agent of the Elector's at Rome and a man of considerable accomplishments, in addition to which his natural courtesy of demeanor made him especially suitable for the mission of treating with a touchy subject like Luther. One might wonder why Erasmus, after all his dedications to Pope Leo and his Cardinals, was not selected for this arduous post. The reason will be tolerably clear to any reader who has followed our account of Erasmus' career thus far. Neither at this nor any other period of his life was Erasmus held in very high esteem at Rome except for his scholarship, which all admired. They were well informed there of his personal views and sentiments; and if they really merited the reputation for astuteness with which the Germans and others credited them, they could not reasonably have been expected to repose any trust in him whatsoever. Luther himself knew this, for in writing to his friend and confidant Spalatin he relates the following incident:

> At the court of the Bishop of Brandenburg the question was lately asked as to what my confidence was, and in whose support I trusted. One replied, "In Erasmus, Capito, and other learned men." "No," said the Bishop, "these would have no weight with the Pope." [22]

It is beyond dispute that Leo's choice of Miltitz was an admirable one, for, being a Saxon, he looked at the matter from Luther's point of view. He rebuked Tetzel most sharply and practically acknowledged that Luther had been in the right on the matter of the *indulgences*. What he finally succeeded in accomplishing with Luther we learn from the latter's letter to the Elector in the early part of January, 1519. In it he says:

> Yesterday Charles von Miltitz set forth very earnestly the discredit and dishonor done through me to the Roman See, and I promised to do with all humility what I could to make reparation. . . . First, I agreed to drop the matter and let it die of itself, on condition that my adversaries do the same. . . . Secondly, I have promised to write to his Holiness the Pope, submitting myself humbly to him and acknowledging that I have been too heated and violent, though I did not intend thereby to harm the Holy Roman Church, but rather, as a true son of the Church, to set myself against the blasphemous preaching which has brought the Roman Church into contempt and reproach among the people. Thirdly, I consented to put forth an address exhorting all to follow, obey, and honor the Roman Church, and to interpret my writings, not to the discredit, but to the honor of that Church; and I promised to confess in the same that I have been too warm, and perchance, out of season, in what I have said. . . . Fourthly, Master

[22] De Wette, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 189.

> Spalatin, at the instance of Fabian, proposed to lay the matter in dispute before the most reverend Archbishop of Saltzburg, by whose decision, to be made after consultation with learned men, I must abide, unless I may choose to appeal from it to a future council.[23]

Writing to Scheurl a few days afterwards, he says:

> I have had a very friendly meeting with Charles Miltitz, and it has been agreed, first, that complete silence on this subject shall be kept by both sides; and, secondly, that by order of the Supreme Pontiff some German bishop shall point out the errors I shall retract. But, except God shall interpose, nothing will be brought to pass, especially if they try to force me with that new decretal, the which I have not yet seen.[24]

So we see that, as far as Luther was concerned, if anyone could have influenced him it would surely have been Miltitz. But it turned out that no one could have changed him in the least. Miltitz had the matter very much at heart, and naturally hoped to succeed where Cajetan had failed, even if we fail to credit him with the loftier motive of love of God and the Church. There is no doubt that he was sincere and earnest in his endeavors to bring about a reconciliation between Luther and the Church authorities; and when he thought he had accomplished it he was moved to tears of joy when he and Luther gave each other the kiss of peace.

The cause of the breaking of the silence which had been pledged on both sides was the famous Leipzig disputation between Eck and Carlstadt, of which we have already treated. Luther felt that he was involved in the matter, and insisted on being heard; and thus the sore which had begun to heal was opened anew. Eck then went to Rome, and returned with the famous Bull which formally condemned Luther. What Luther did on its receipt is contained in his letter to Spalatin:

> In the year 1520, the tenth of December, at the ninth hour, were burnt at Wittemburg without the eastern gate, near the Holy Cross, all the books of the Pope, the decree, the decretals, . . . the recent bull of Leo X, in order that the incendiary papists may see that it requires no great power to burn books which they cannot refute.[25]

But he was in a perilous position; for, besides the Pope's Bull which formally excommunicated him, he had been repudiated by many of the German bishops and condemned by the Universities of Leipzig and Cologne, and still later by those of Louvain and Paris. His sovereign the Elector was his only protection and stay, and the more imperiously the Church authorities insisted on his disciplining him, the more obstinately resolved the Elector became not to deliver him up to them. When the opponents of the Reformer could not subject him to their wishes, they turned all the more angrily on Erasmus, whose example Luther had so strenuously followed in this entire affair. There was no mincing

[23] *Ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 207. [24] *Ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 211. [25] *Ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 532.

of words, for he was plainly informed that Luther was only bettering the lessons that Erasmus had taught him. From all sides came reports to his ears of the public odium he had incurred, and the detestation in which he was held. The Religious Orders were especially bitter in their denunciations; and if their animadversions were not entirely based on zeal for God's service, but also contained a little human gratification, Erasmus had only himself to blame, for in thus inciting Luther by word and example, he had delivered himself, bound hand and foot, into the hands of his adversaries. So now his letters are full of denials. He insists that he has been misunderstood, maligned, misinterpreted. He hastens to show wherein he differs widely from Luther and minimizes whatever he cannot wholly deny. In May 1521 he writes to Jodocus Jonas, who was one of Luther's friends, in an attempt to show that he must not be considered an adherent of Luther:

> But, my dear Jonas, I am compelled at times to long for a token of the spirit of the Gospel, when I behold Luther, but more particularly his partisans, artfully attempting to involve others in their odious and perilous business. . . . What need was there so often to make invidious mention of my name when it was not at all necessary? . . . Perhaps I did somewhere admonish people that vows were not to be rashly taken, and did not approve of it that, leaving at home their wives and children whose character and morals they should be protecting, they should be running to the shrine of St. James, or to Jerusalem, where they have no business going. I do in my works warn the young not to be enticed into the trammels of a Religious Order before they know themselves, and what an Order is; but Luther, as they tell me, condemns every sort of vow entirely. Somewhere I complain that the duty of confession has been made a burden by the subtleties of certain ones; but Luther, they tell me, teaches that all sorts of confessions are to be rejected as pernicious. In one place I said that the best writers are particularly to be read, adding that from the books of Dionysius there was not so much profit to be derived as his titles promised; while Luther calls the man foolish, as I hear, and entirely unworthy of being read. A nice state of affairs indeed, if what I stated truly and temperately on some occasion another should distort by transcending my limitations. I would be hampered by very unjust conditions were I to be compelled to answer for it that no one hereafter would make a bad use of my writings, a felicity which did not fall to the lot even of the apostle Paul, if we may credit his colleague Peter on the subject. Although, to tell the truth, had I known beforehand that such a generation as the present was about to arise, either I would not have written many things that I have, or I would have written otherwise. . . . Luther could, with great profit to Christ's flock, have expounded the philosophy of the Gospel, and have benefited the whole world by publishing his books, if he had only refrained from these excesses which cannot but result in disorder.

Then, after uttering all these harsh things about Luther, he tries to soften them by saying:

> But someone may perhaps ask if I am in the same mind with regard to Luther that I always was. Yes, I am. I have always desired that, with the exception of a few things which displeased me, he might simply expound the philosophy of the Gospel, from which the character of this generation has too widely departed. I would always prefer to have him corrected than stifled; and I would have him so handle the work of Christ that he would be approved by the officials of the Church, or, at least, so that he would not be censured.[26]

In this connection also may be quoted his letter to Aloysius Marlianus, Bishop of Tuy, of this same period:

> Your prudence warned me long ago not to become mixed up in this affair of Luther, although your admonition reached me when I was quite mindful of such a necessity. So far was I from becoming entangled in it that with my utmost powers I opposed its reaching a point which I would not desire. Only in the beginning, before I perceived whither Luther was tending, did I disapprove of those people's seditious clamors. My advice was that the matter should be left in the hands of the learned to be settled by written discussion. I preferred to have Luther corrected, but not extinguished; or, if he were to be destroyed, I desired this to be brought about without exciting a great tumult in the world. Even now the Roman Pontiff would approve of this plan if he knew accurately how the matter is being conducted here, and with what ardor many nations are following Luther. But this was a scheme of certain monks who love me no more than they love good literature, in order to involve me willy-nilly with Luther. Those who seem to favor Luther have tried in every way to draw me to their side. Those who are opposed to Luther have endeavored to force me into his faction, railing at my name in public sermons everywhere with fiercer hatred than against Luther himself. But by none of their schemes can I be moved from my mental resolve. I acknowledge Christ, Luther I know not; and I acknowledge the Roman Church, which I hold not to differ from the Catholic Church. From this Church not even death shall tear me, unless she shall openly be torn away from Christ. Sedition I have always abhorred; and would that Luther and all the Germans had felt the same abhorrence. . . . My aim has never been other than to consult for the dignity of the Roman Pontiff and theologians generally, and for the tranquillity of the whole Christian world. So far I have read through no work of Luther's however small; nor have I ever defended any of his theories, even in joke. . . . So I avoid Luther, but do not approve of those men.[27] They are few, but they excite the multitude. I do not condemn their Order, but they

[26] Eros. Ep. 1202, ll. 193 *passim ad fin.*

[27] The monks mentioned above.

> are consulting very poorly for its interests. . . . And now I am prepared by every proof possible to show that I will not depart by a breadth of a finger-nail from those who are in accord with the Catholic Church. I know that everything must be borne rather than that the public order throughout the world be thrown into confusion; I know that it is the part of piety to conceal the truth at times, and that it is not to be put forth in every place, nor on all occasions, nor before certain people, nor in certain ways, nor without reservation. March 25, 1521.[28]

We will reserve our comments on the morality of this last sentence until a later occasion, stating simply that Erasmus always consistently acted according to the sentiments here expressed.

But meanwhile the new Emperor Charles V had called another Diet of the Empire to be held at Worms in the beginning of the new year 1521. He had in the previous November written to the Elector Frederick requesting him to send Luther to the Diet there to be examined before impartial and able judges, and suggesting the propriety of Luther's writing nothing in the interim either against the Pope or the Church doctrines in general. Accordingly, Frederick notified Luther to appear and secured for him a safe-conduct from the Emperor.

The proceedings of the Diet of Worms are very involved and intricate reading for the historian who seeks to give a plain and succinct account of them. Political considerations above all else seemed to rule and guide the actions of the kings and potentates who took part therein; and this applies in the same measure to the legates of the Roman Curia. The Emperor wished to sway the Diet to the end that it might assist him in his designs against France. Each of the interested parties had its own secret or open design to further; with the Elector Frederick, it was his desire to check the power of the Roman Curia within his domains, and especially to diminish the drain of money which was passing out of his dominions into the coffers of the Roman treasury. Others viewed with a greedy eye the rich abbeys and priories that were heavily endowed by the pious bequests of dead and gone benefactors, and over which they had no control. So the personal element was strong, as it always is when interest clashes with interest, and intrigue is to be met with counter-intrigue in an effort to wrest something out of the maze of conflicting claims. We may fairly assume that the object of the two papal legates Aleander and Caracciola was to vindicate the power of the Pope and the dignity of the Church, both of which had been set at naught by Luther. Although the account of Luther's appearance before the Emperor is intensely dramatic, we cannot delay our readers with a matter which does not strictly speaking come within the scope of our subject. Let it suffice to say that he maintained his position before his adversaries, and would not retract a syllable unless he was then and there convicted of his error. The Emperor had more important matters before him for solution, or, let

[28] Eras. Ep. 1195.

us say, at that moment they seemed so; and as a consequence Luther was dismissed under the terms of his safe-conduct to return to his home; and we need not remind our readers that the Elector had him waylaid on the way back and conveyed to a place of safe-keeping, the location of which was known to only two or three besides himself.

CHAPTER XI

CONTINUED ATTACKS: TROUBLE AT LOUVAIN

Meanwhile Erasmus was being treated with scant courtesy by his fellow-professors at the University of Louvain, who spared no pains to convey to him their opinion that he was fully as bad as Luther. Since the more pronounced of them were very able men and finished theologians, but happened at the same time, unfortunately, to be Carmelites and Dominicans, he was thus doubly incensed with them; and there ensued a battle of polemics which was fierce and deadly, no quarter being asked or given on either side. The professors were convinced that Erasmus was fully as heretical as Luther; and their object was consequently to force him to declare himself. To accomplish this they very strategically put the matter to him in this wise: "If you are not for Luther you must be against him. If you are against him, it is incumbent on a man of your acknowledged abilities to attack him openly and point out where he is heretical. Ergo, if you do not do so, we know where you stand."

That was their line of argument, and not ill conceived for the purpose. They had Erasmus at a disadvantage: for, if there was one thing more than another which he hated, it was being compelled to take a decided position and to show his hand. At other times and in other circumstances he had saved himself by subterfuge, but here was no chance for such: those who were now harassing him were far too clever. Something of his state of mind may be gleaned from his letter to the rector of the University, Godescalc Rosemondt, written in December, 1520:

> Now I suppose that whatever is disagreeable to me is therefore a delight to certain of them. But I have put up with even greater things than this, and can still endure them; but I should be lying were I to say that such things affect me not. I should make less of it were I to be kicked by a mule or a madman; still, I prefer not to be kicked at all. As with life, so with reputation: he can easily jeopardize that of another who has no regard for his own. . . . Although I tarried so many days at Cologne, I uttered not a word of complaint, relying on your statement that you expected Egmondanus would keep silent for the future. And so I did not expect any new disturbance from that Frisian gentleman. Your authority can put a stop to these disagreeable matters even by a word. . . . Between the times I was writing this letter I dined with Maximilian the Abbot of Middleburgh, as he dwelt near by, and there met by chance the Prior of the Dominicans. He denied that he knew what he [Egmondanus] had said about me; but yet by his face, his atti-

tude, and his entire conversation he could not conceal the fact that the affair had been done with his knowledge and consent. On the following day appeared my Frisian himself as if to make his excuses, a youth of marvelous self-confidence, who seemed in his own estimation to utter naught but pure gems of speech, pure flowers of conversation, pure oracles of discourse. He confessed that on St. Catherine's Day he had said more things about me than had come to my ears; and by way of excusing himself he proposed, with wonderful assurance, several things which were so foolish that it would be most foolish for me to reply to them. However, I gave him his answer in three words. In an apostrophe to St. Paul this Egmondanus prayed that, just as St. Paul from a persecutor of the Church became a Doctor of the Church, so sometime might Luther and Erasmus become converted. What can be done with such people? They desire nothing more than to be in some way insulting. They are disappointed that I am not a follower of Luther, as in real truth I am not, unless he subserve the glory of Christ. I know that I have a somewhat loose tongue, yet nobody ever heard me approving the doctrine of Luther. His books I have never had the desire to read, beyond a few pages, and these I rather skimmed over than read. I have always and most constantly approved of your arguments against him, and your writings even more so, but especially those of Master John Turenhout, who, I hear, has learnedly and without affectation disputed him.[1]

It would seem that the rector was not in deep sympathy with Erasmus, or, like the other professors, doubted his sincerity. In any event, he does not appear to have silenced the accusers of Erasmus to any great extent, as is evident from another letter which the latter wrote him, apparently in great tribulation of mind:

Magnificent Lord Rector. I have no doubt that you know, what everybody is aware of, how seditiously a certain Dominican, recruited by that other brawler, has assailed my name, refraining from no kind of abuse, and at the same time lying about me. . . . I am not surprised that the Dominicans have the boldness to act in this manner; but I am surprised to see their acts approved by the Faculty of Theology. The Faculty could not stand a word from this prater if it were directed obliquely at Egmondanus; but they permit these seditious, these more than scurrilous, things with equanimity, and instigate them, unless I am deceived. This method of subduing Erasmus, I suppose, commends itself to them. Now, were I to act with as much lack of sense as they, might not great disorder be started? . . . But I am not so devoid of sense as to desire a conflict with the Dominicans: such as they are, I leave them to be judged by God. I am no enemy of the monks, nor of theologians, unless perchance he who does not approve of everything in their characters is an enemy of all Christians. If the Faculty of Theology have anything against me, let them expostulate

[1] *Ibid.*, 1164.

with me, let them show me what they wish. I am prepared to give an account of my studies to all dispassionate men; for to converse with Egmondanus is not to talk at all. Mimus well said: "He who disputes with a drunken man talks with a man who is not there"; [2] but this is truer still when one disputes with a madman. This scurrilous commotion displeases even the laity, for which reason I doubt not it displeases you who are one of the best of men; but your gentleness is a cruelty to me, yea, to the entire University. It was incumbent on you, I holding my peace, to impose silence in turn on their whole monastery, and to demand a cessation of such petulance from all their preachers. One has already been forbidden to transgress, under the severest penalties; but whoever heard of even the slightest penalty being really inflicted? Even boys understand what those amount to. Hereafter I shall not trouble your Lordship, fully expecting that you will perform your duty; but if not, it is my intention not to pay the slightest notice to them. If any disturbance do arise, let it be imputed to those who have either been dissembling, or favored this enmity towards me from the beginning. You certainly are not capable of dissimulation. Farewell, magnificent lord rector, and if you desire anything of me you will find me most obedient. Louvain, c. December 17, 1520.[3]

Louvain was evidently becoming a very uncomfortable place of residence for Erasmus. He was being attacked at this time by Lee as well, and between the criticisms of the Englishman and the warfare being carried on against him by the Faculty of Theology of the University his life just then was anything but a pleasant one. His *Praise of Folly* and his *Colloquies* were again returning to plague him; for it is indisputable that he was suspected of a leaning towards Luther, more on account of his sentiments as expressed in those two fatal books than for anything he was writing or uttering at the present time. When he told the rector, in the letter which we have just quoted, that he would pay no more attention to the hostility of Egmondanus, he evidently did not mean it. He was a most irritable man and easily incited to controversy, so that instead of whistling the matter down the wind, as he had promised the rector, he proceeded to cite Egmondanus before that official and the assembled Faculty, but with doubtful efficacy, we may assume, judging by his own account of the affair which we find in a letter to Francis Craneveldt, a councilor of Bruges:

. . . My old friends here cease not to be like themselves: they conspire, they murmur, they bark, they threaten; they charge it is my fault that the business of Luther does not turn out so disastrously for him as they desire. The Carmelite Egmondanus in his church sermons and in his public lectures throws stones at me, but at times he is laughed at even by his fellow-Carmelites. When on my citation he appeared some time ago before the rector of this University, he hurled in my face such a torrent of lying abuse that he was ready to call me a sacrilegious wretch, a parricide, a robber, or

[2] Publilius "Syrus," *Sententiæ*, A, 12. [3] Eras. Ep. 1172.

whatever else might come into his mouth. While to himself he seemed a brave man, to the rector and myself he seemed what he was, a madman. Oh, what a prodigious license of the tongue in a theologian, in a monk, in an old man! At the first outbreak of the fellow's petulance my bile began to rise; but soon I was better pleased to laugh at him than to refute him. At last the whole quarrel resolved itself into this. If I would state in my writings that the theologians at Louvain were upright and sincere, if I would use my pen as a stiletto upon Luther, then we would all be brothers; otherwise there could be no concord between us. I replied that they should first show themselves to be what they desired to be considered. Concerning Luther I replied that I had no intention now of mixing myself up in so odious a cause in which I had never associated myself hitherto. However, it did not please me that he should be attacked by public objurgations, but that he should be refuted by the publication of suitable works, such a plan being more worthy of theologians; for so he could be entirely extinguished if he were first driven out from the minds of men, while at present only his books are thrown out from the libraries, he himself remaining fixed in their minds. . . . Finally, I said, it did not seem just to me that I should interfere in an outside matter which did not originate with me, since it was more appropriate that those who began the trouble should finish it, that they should end the web who started it, that they should eat the pot of garlic who had prepared it. Moreover, why should I, rather than somebody else, write against Luther? And if it were foolish for every theologian to write against one man, when this could be done by a few just as well, was it not especially appropriate that those men should write against him who had entered into discussion with him, who had assailed him in their sermons, and had condemned him to his injury before even the Sovereign Pontiff had done so? Moreover, if I happen to possess some skill with the pen, I am not the only one, nor should this affair be handled in elegant phrases, but by solid erudition, to which even those people make especial claim. Add to this, that it would seem cruel in me to destroy this man already prostrated, overthrown, and even reduced to ashes. Then again, it might not be safe for me to incur the anger of this man, who is neither fangless nor crippled, and who evidently is a dangerous fellow, as his books will testify; nor do I deem it wise for my interests to excite against myself without cause the hatred of so many German princes and so many learned men, etc. December 18, 1520.[4]

We should like to quote the letter in full for the knowledge it gives us of the motives which actuated Erasmus in refusing at that time to become the champion of the Church as against Luther, since later on he allowed himself to be persuaded, though with very bad grace, to assume that office. Like many other great writers Erasmus was not a skilful controversialist; and few knew this fact better than himself.

[4] *Ibid.*, 1173.

We have seen this illustrated in his controversies with Lee, Faber Stapulensis, and Latomus, and more especially in his disputes with Stunica, of which we anticipated the account some pages back, although chronologically these did not take place until a short time later than this present juncture. With minor opponents his fund of wit and sarcasm was mostly relied upon to cover them with confusion; but, where the rank of his adversary, either by reason of learning or position, made such weapons unavailable, he did not always emerge with such happy issue. He had a marvelous craftiness in extricating himself from the difficulties in which he was constantly involved, and a wholesome respect for those who used the scholastic method of dialectics. He dreaded the deadly syllogism which his opponents employed on him with telling effect, because this engine of discussion deprived him of the benefit of his redoubtable wit, and his satire was helpless before the major and minor premise. This, quite as much as the subtleties of the Schoolmen, was the reason for his hatred of the scholastic method of teaching.

But, in the case of Luther, it was not methods but the man himself that Erasmus feared. He feared his ability, he feared his earnestness, he feared his violence, but above all he feared his own weaknesses which so patently lay open to Luther's attack. So he temporized, and yielded to the promptings of expediency and self-interest. The most pregnant sentence in the whole letter above quoted is the last one, wherein he states openly that he does not deem it for his own best interests to antagonize the German princes who were Luther's friends. Here we see one of the dominant motives of Erasmus' whole life; not, "Is this thing right or wrong?" but rather, "How is this thing going to affect me?" It was not conscience that made a coward of him, but self. With Luther, at least in the beginning of his career, it was entirely different. In his early days Luther never stopped to count the cost, and erred as lamentably as Erasmus, but for totally different reasons.

Now Egmondanus and the Dominicans, of whom Erasmus speaks so often, were as well aware of the weak spots in the character of Erasmus as was Luther. They were also aware of his wonderful ability with the pen, and were angered that he should hold up their cloth to ridicule in his writings when his talents might in their estimation be better employed in coping with a foeman and an occasion more worthy of his vast abilities. They wanted to know where he stood in reference to Luther, and refused to accept his deftly assumed neutrality. They insisted that to oppose and refute Luther was a duty that he owed to the Church; and we may assume that they often quoted Luke ii, 23 to him, where Christ says, "He who is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth." But with Erasmus it was evidently, "Oh, if these pestilential monks would only leave me alone, and not seek to drag me into this matter!" The religious world was in a state of upheaval, and it was unsafe for him to take a position on this vexed question which later developments might make it advisable for him to change. On the one hand was Luther, backed up by powerful interests which it might be injudicious for him to offend, and in addition the fact that in his inmost heart he sympathized with some of Luther's

expressed sentiments. On the other hand was the whole Catholic Church, which Luther was setting at defiance, but which contained so many of Erasmus' best friends, including all his former English ones. Irony of fate that his best friends should be aligned with his worst enemies in demanding that he come to the rescue of a cause which he was not sure was right, against a cause which he was not sure was wrong! Much may be said in extenuation of Erasmus, however, and so also may much be said in behalf of Egmondanus and the monks in general. Erasmus had hated the whole seed, breed, and generation of monks from his youth down to the present, and overlooked no occasion of showing it. On their side they had good reasons for doubting his orthodoxy, and made no hesitation about accusing him of heresy. Let us lay aside the assumption that the great writer was now being hounded by a lot of ignorant and vicious monks, because the facts will not bear us out. They were bright men, well educated men, and men who held chairs in one of the leading universities of that day and age. They had pleaded with him, expostulated with him, disputed with him, and in every way labored with him to side against Luther, or, if he felt that he could not do this, at least not to openly express sympathy with his cause—and all this long before the quarrel between him and them had reached the acute stage—but all to no use. This we may argue they had a right to do as long as Erasmus professed to be in accord with the Catholic Church. Erasmus wrote to Thomas More an account of a meeting at which himself and Egmondanus were had up before the rector; and although he has described the affair with all his satiric powers we cannot see wherein Egmondanus suffers much in our estimation. Erasmus appeared in truth not to be very proud of the affair at all; so much so that he sent no word of it to More until More somehow got wind of it and wrote him about it. We feel that we ought to reproduce some of Erasmus' letter here; for if we read between the lines, and make due allowance for its being written by one of the parties interested, we can elicit a fairly just attitude of both sides of the dispute, and deduce therefrom whether or not Egmondanus merits all the obloquy that Erasmus bestows on him.

> The account which was given you of my little meeting with Nicholas in the presence of the rector of this University is not altogether true, nor yet does it entirely lack truth, for such is rumor. . . . We met, the rector seated himself, with me on the right and Egmondanus on the left of him. This was no accidental arrangement, for he was aware of Egmondanus' temperament, and had made the mistake of supposing that I might become irritated; hence he sat between us so that he might prevent a fight, if perchance the wordy war degenerated into fisticuffs. The rector stated the matter at issue in a few words, and then Egmondanus, with a face of marvelous and ridiculous gravity, began: "I have injured no one in my sermons; and if Erasmus deems that he has been hurt, I am here to answer to him."
>
> I asked him if he thought there could be a more atrocious injury

than to traduce with untruths, in a public sermon, an innocent man. Thereupon, becoming excited, and abandoning his former demeanor, with his face becoming still more purple (for it was red before that, as it was just now after dinner), he said:

"Why do you traduce us in your books on divinity?"

"Your name does not appear anywhere in my books," I replied.

"Neither was your name mentioned in my sermons," said he.

Then I pointed out that my books were not strictly works on divinity, since in them I told about my dreams at times, and treated of every kind of trifling subject, which would be inappropriate in church sermons.

"Moreover," I said, "I have written less about you than you merited. You lied about me publicly in saying that I favored Luther, when I have never favored him in the sense in which the people interpret your statements, and as yourself imagine."

Upon this, no longer simply excited, but like a madman, he replied:

"You are the cause of all this trouble, turncoat and crafty fox that you are, for there is nothing that with that tail of yours you cannot twist to your purpose."

An abundance of things like this did he vomit rather than utter, which were then suggested to him by his noble rage. I felt my own anger rising, and presently a certain word slipped out, the prelude of not sufficiently restrained utterance, not "you fool," but something else which smells worse than it sounds. But I controlled myself immediately, deeming it wiser to spare the rector's health and my own (for I was not very well at that time, and the rector was under the care of the physicians). In a word, I thought it foolish and undignified to rage against a madman, so, smiling a little, I turned to the rector and said:

"I might allege his evident affronts; I might repay abuse with abuse: he calls me a sly fox, and I might in turn call him a wolf; he calls me two-faced, and I might call him four-faced; he says that I twist everything to my own purpose with my tail, and I could say that he taints everything with his tongue. But such things are unworthy of men, and scarcely even of women. Let us deal with the facts. Imagine that I—"

"I am not imagining," he said, interrupting with a roar like a sailor's; "I do not wish to imagine. That is your forte: you poets imagine and falsify everything."

Now I was more inclined to laugh than be angry, so I said:

"If you will not imagine, then grant me—"

"I will not grant," he interjected.

"Well, suppose it to be the case," I rejoined.

"I will suppose nothing," said he.

"Well, put it this way," I said again.

"I will not," said he.

"Let it be thus," I tried.

"But it is not thus," he replied.

"What do you want me to say, then?" I finally asked.

"Say:" he answered, " 'It is so.' "

The rector could hardly move him to permit me to speak.

"Though it be true," said I, "that I have written some things in my books other than I should, still it was not your place, in order to gratify your personal animosity, to abuse the privileges of a sacred edifice, under the authority of a solemn sermon, and to abuse the credulity of a simple people. You might have written against me in turn, or have brought me to trial.[5] Now, it is not so much me you injure as this whole University, as this entire community, as this office [you hold] of preaching the divine word, which is dedicated to far different uses."

Since he was at a loss what to answer, he switched off to another subject, as he is wont to do.

"Ja," he said, "you would like to have a similar privilege."

"What privilege?" said I, "that of preaching?"

He nodded his head.

"But," I replied, "I used to preach formerly, and I feel that I can say things better worth while than some of the things I hear you uttering occasionally."

"Why don't you, then?" he retorted.

"Because," I rejoined, "I deem that I am doing better work in writing books, although I would make no objection to your efforts, providing you would teach those things which are conducive to morality."

Then it recurred to the fellow's mind that I had stated in my letter to the rector (for he had read it), that such treatment was undeserved by me, since I had merited better.

"Wherein do you merit better?" said he.

"Most people admit," said I, "that I have done some service to good literature."

"Ja," said he, "so you call it, but it is bad literature."

"And in sacred literature," I went on, "I have restored a great deal."

"Yes, and you have falsified a great deal," he replied.

"Why then does the Roman Pontiff approve it with his *Brief?"* said I.

"Ja, a *Brief,"* said he, "but who ever saw your *Brief?"* wishing to insinuate that it had been counterfeited by myself.

"Do you insist that I carry it around with me for everybody, one by one, to see, or exhibit it in the market-place?" said I. "I showed it to Atensis, and Dorp saw it."

"Ja, Dorp," said he and was about to add some abuse against him, but the rector restrained him with a glance.

"You may see it yourself if you wish," I added.

"I do not want to see anything of yours," he replied.

"Why then do you condemn me?" I asked. "Why in condemning Luther does the Pope's authority so much count with you, while it is not of the slightest moment when approving my writings?"

Shifting his line of comments again, he attempted to move me

[5] Before an ecclesiastical tribunal, we assume.

by a little rhetoric in reminding me with what great honors the divines of Louvain had loaded me before I had written against them.

"What have we not done for you?" said he.

However, there was no mention of the virulent abuse with which Egmondanus had lacerated me, even before I had gone to live at Louvain. I replied that it was not my custom to make little of any man's kindness to me; however, hitherto, I had not experienced much kindness at the hands of the divines. Hereupon, for some reason, he became quite mild and said:

"That is true, because we have been unable to do so."

"Therefore," said I, "do not attribute to me what you have no warrant for. For I have experienced your power to harm, but have never felt any of your kindness, excepting that you have invited me to your functions, as you style them, and to certain customary banquets, from which no one is more averse than myself, so far am I from thinking myself under any great obligation to you on that account. You have also invited me to share your friendship, but as I never solicited it, so I have never given you any reason for recalling it." . . .

"I am glad you remind me of that," said he. "You boast that friendship has been reëstablished between us."

"What? Was it not?" said I. "Did we not all of us nobly drink together in the Collége du Faucon?" (He had arranged this dinner for the moderator of his college at a large outlay, and, because it was Wednesday, as much fish had been cooked for one Egmondanus as would suffice for four athletes.) "And was it not proposed as a condition of peace that each should blot out the offenses of the other by a general amnesty?"

He denied this strongly, though it had taken place in the presence of so many witnesses. The rector interrupted us here, and calmed down the discussion to remark that it might be said that there existed concord amongst all Christians, but that this particular peace pact had not been brought to a conclusion. With a smile I asked him with how many drinking bouts a theological peace pact might be brought about, since I was simple enough to think that peace might be established among good men without any drinking. This made Egmondanus remember something else.

"I am glad you remind me," said he, "that you are making a laughing-stock of us, and are vilifying us as drunkards."

On my demanding to know when I had charged him with being drunk, he said:

"You write that I was mellow from a too generous dinner; what else is that but to be drunk?"

"That I wrote without naming you," I replied, "and I narrate it as told me by others; for your Carmelite brethren excused you on the ground that no one would take amiss what you said when mellow from too generous a dinner. . . . And even if I had mentioned your name, what would have been particularly wrong about the fact that what you had dared to say publicly, I had related with

the same liberty? But in this instance I suppressed your name for the sake of your reputation, and narrated a wicked matter with all civility. You said that Faber and I, who are just now in conflict, will hereafter continue to fight each other in the bottom of hell."

"Ja," said he, "that you have heard from others."

"True enough," I answered, "but not from one person alone. But do you dare to deny it?"

He remained silent, which made me wonder at this newly found modesty of the fellow. Presently, wandering off on another tack, he declared that he would never cease exclaiming against Luther until he had put him down. I responded that as far as I was concerned he might cry out against him until he burst, provided that he did not brawl against me; nor did I complain of what he said about Luther, but of what he said about me; that if he was so bent on the matter he could go on, but that he would gain nothing except to make of himself a laughing-stock for good men, since during that very sermon I had at times seen everybody in the congregation smiling.

"Ja," said he, "they were your own friends."

"How much they were friends of mine I know not," said I, "for most of them I knew not even by sight." . . .

While I was speaking of various things, I said that it ought not to appear strange that I had complained somewhat about theologians in my writings, since John Standish, a Minorite monk and theologian, now Bishop of St. Asaph, in the presence of the king and queen of England, with many of the nobility and the erudite standing by, had most impudently assailed me on three issues: first, that I had taken away the Resurrection; second, that I made no account of the sacrament of Matrimony; and third, that I held the Eucharist in slight estimation; although in all my books there is nothing that I more strongly affirm than the Resurrection; and I have so spoken of Matrimony in a published *Declamatio* that theologians deemed me to be in heresy because I had attributed to Matrimony more than was its due; and finally, with relation to the Eucharist I have never written or spoken unless in a becoming manner, that is, with the greatest reverence.

"Ja," said he, "all these things are perhaps true." . . .

Then he objected to my letter to Luther, to which I replied:

"In that letter I admonish him as to what he should avoid."

"Yes," said he, "you teach him how to write."

It would even seem that the fellow would take it badly if Luther had written a little better, so much did he desire that Luther should be, not corrected, but destroyed. But he could not endure in any way that I had said to Luther: "I do not advise you what to do, but that you continue to do what you are doing." When I excused this on the grounds of rhetorical courtesy, where we say that we are not advising at a moment when we are especially advising, he again flared up:

"You've expressed it beautifully," said he, "for it is truly an artifice of the rhetoricians to falsify, to counterfeit, to distort everything."

With a smile I admitted that at times rhetoricians did lie, but that occasionally our own Masters in Theology did the same thing. Again, when I stated that I had been consulting for the dignity of the divines, he replied:

"Leave that care to us; we will look out for that."

When I added that in burning the books of Luther they might be driving him from the libraries, but not surely from the minds of men, he said:

"*Ja,* from their minds where you have placed him."

When finally all hope of agreement between us was lost—so that, if I mentioned good literature, he called it bad; if I spoke about the correcting of a work, he dubbed it the falsifying, rather; if I said that I was not interested in any faction, he immediately styled me the head of that faction; and stood ready to deny that there was a stone in an olive or a shell on a walnut were I to make the statement—the rector cutting short the quarrel which had lasted too long, observed that such recriminations were unworthy of divines, but that he would willingly listen to anything which would restore the shattered friendship.

"Come," said I, "since you say that no single drinking bout will serve for the restoration of concord, what remains to be done?"

Urged by the rector he replied:

"That you restore to us our good name, which has been injured by you."

"Where," said I, "in my *Epistles?*" He nodded.

"Those having been already published," I replied, "I am unable to do what you desire, although I have injured no man's reputation in them."

"Withdraw what you have said," he persisted.

"How?"

"Write that there are theologians at Louvain who are sincere and upright."

"That I have never denied," said I, "but if those whom I criticized will furnish me proper material, I will write magnificently about them."

At this he got angry again.

"Yes, and if you will furnish us the opportunity to speak well of you, we will do so," was the rejoinder. "You have a pen, we have a tongue. You accuse us of barking at you behind your back, but I am speaking to your face."

"It would not be surprising if with your manners you were to spit in the face of a good man," said I.

He retorted that he had never yet been so disrespectful, and the rector, breaking in, admonished us that it was about Luther, who was the cause of the trouble, that we ought to speak.

"Come," said Egmondanus, "you have written for Luther; now write against him."

I denied that I had written for him, but had rather assisted the theologians against him, and instanced many reasons why I could not—a lack of leisure, a want of ability, a feeling of fear—and I alleged, as a further excuse, that it would smack of cruelty were I to give free rein to my pen against a man who was already prostrate and conquered.

"Write just that:" he exclaimed, "write that Luther has been overthrown by us."

I replied that there were not lacking those who had already vociferated that fact, even if I kept silent. Moreover, it would seem more appropriate that those who had won the victory should celebrate it; and that it was not clear to me that they had conquered him when they had not yet published their works against him.

Despairing at this, he turned to the rector, saying:

"Did I not tell you we should accomplish nothing? As long as he refuses to write against Luther, just so long shall we consider him a partisan of Luther."

"But," said I, "by this same reasoning I shall hold you to be a partisan of Luther, since you have not written against him, and not only you, but a great many others besides."

Thereupon, waving rather than saying a farewell to the rector, but not to me, he departed, just as those who, in a school of gladiators, receiving a wound outside the rules governing the contest, shake hands with the rest, but not with him by whom they have been wounded. c. November, 1520.[6]

This account was intended to be humorous, but, of a surety, the occasion of it was far from humorous either to Erasmus or Egmondanus. Drummond is a little unjust to the latter when he characterizes him as "an old Carmelite priest, very ignorant, very obstinate, and very violent." After all, we get his picture from the brush of Erasmus, who could hardly be called unbiased in the matter. It is not conceivable that any of the opponents of Erasmus was ever "ignorant" in the accepted meaning of that term. Egmondanus was a Doctor of Divinity, with all the learning and erudition that such a title has always demanded. In addition, he was a professor in one of the leading universities of Europe, and not even Erasmus himself questions his scholarly acquirements. Why then should we? It was scarcely charitable in Erasmus to hint that Egmondanus came into the presence of the rector and himself with a face flushed with wine and good cheer, when we remember how bitterly he resented similar insinuations which were made of himself after his residence with Aldus at Venice. In the same way one feels that Egmondanus hardly deserves the taunt that Erasmus flung at him, in saying that he should hardly feel surprised from his manner to see him spit in the face of any good man. This was gratuitous and not at all germane to the matter under discussion, and must have served only to alienate neutral listeners from the support of Erasmus. Although it might not appear so from our subject's biased account, one feels upon the whole that Egmondanus emerged from the affair with fully as much

[6] Eras. Ep. 1162.

dignity as himself; but that the whole discussion was conducted on such a vulgar plane adds no credit to either Erasmus or Egmondanus.

We have already referred to Erasmus' visit to Cologne, during which he made to Frederick the memorable epigram: "Luther . . . has touched the crown of the Pontiff and the bellies of the monks." Then also he wrote the *axiomata* for Spalatin. In these acts he went farther in his support of Luther than ever before or after; and we may wonder why. It is to be remembered that he had just come from the coronation of Charles V, driven from Aix, as Professor Smith has carefully ascertained, by an outbreak of the plague; there in Cologne, whence the court had moved, there was an air of independence and confidence, an intensely Teutonic feeling of power and *Bruderschaft,* which made the members of the Roman Curia seem weak and petty schemers, and their machinations matters of small importance, easily attended to by the powerful emperor. Exalted to a false assurance by this pervading sense of power, and flattered by the fact that the Elector had definitely sent for him to discuss his protégé, Erasmus dared to let himself go in the writing of these axioms for Spalatin. Here the author in him came to the front. The axioms were to the following effect: that the best minds of Europe were with Luther; that, although two universities had condemned Luther's works, a condemnation was not a confutation; that all the harassed monk asked for, and rightly, was a trial by impartial judges; that Luther was right in objecting to real abuses, and that reform was necessary in the Church; that many things in Luther's doctrine were true, but that a certain amount of moderation was needed; and, finally, that no man could be more disinterested in the matter than Luther, who sought the glory of God rather than the approval of Church authorities. Furthermore, that the papal Bull was probably extorted from Leo and was of too cruel a nature to emanate from a Pontiff of so mild and generous a disposition; that the pernicious power of the Roman Curia was behind it all; that corruption and not religious zeal was the impelling motive behind those who sought Luther's annihilation.[7]

These dashingly written axioms he handed to Spalatin for his use and benefit. Almost immediately, however, Erasmus was appalled at his own temerity. Away, for a moment, from the feeling of power surrounding the newly crowned emperor, away from the air of Teutonic supremacy, Erasmus began, very probably, to recall the devious and tremendous power of the Roman Curia, the all too well-known craftiness of papal diplomacy, the real might of Rome. In a momentary fit of enthusiasm he had flung away his customary caution and had put into the hands of others a dangerous statement of opinion on this vexed and growing world question. No longer could he maintain the attitude of strict neutrality that had thus far served him fairly well: now he must relinquish his own friendships and assume Luther's enmities, and for what? Only the possible chance that if things became too hot for him he might have a friend in the Elector Frederick. And beside the Roman Curia's devious connections, beside the curious and appalling

[7] For the exact axioms, see *D. Martini Lutheri opera latina, ut supra,* Vol. V, pp. 236-42.

weapons of interdict and the like, the power of the Elector seemed a very frail buckler. In a fit of fright he realized what he had done and hastened to send an immediate messenger to Spalatin, earnestly entreating him to return the *axiomata,* alleging his fear that if the papal legate Aleander should get hold of them he might do him a mischief. One recognizes here the true Erasmian touch.

But Spalatin had already dispatched a copy of the *axiomata* to Luther, and perhaps to some others; and when this became known to Erasmus he very probably made things hot for the overzealous Spalatin. As a matter of fact, Spalatin at once wrote to Luther about the matter, doubtless expressing some regret at the leaking out of the affair (for, true to Erasmus' fears, the axioms were promptly published). Luther replied to Spalatin's letter as follows:

> . . . It distresses me no less than yourself that those axioms of Erasmus, and the replies of our Sovereign[8] have appeared in print at Leipzig. I do not know how this has been brought about, not having the slightest knowledge whence they got their copy, and being much surprised thereat. Mine is still in my possession; there is no reason, therefore, why you should blame me in the matter, for their publication is most disagreeable to me since it renders me suspect of fear and vainglory.[9]

[8] To the Pope's legate.
[9] DeWette, *op., cit.,* Vol. I, p. 562.

CHAPTER XII

THE STORM INCREASES: ANOMALOUS POSITION OF ERASMUS

As if to atone for the comfort he had given Luther's friends by these "axioms," Erasmus now seemed to react vigorously against him; and we are not surprised to see him consorting even with the hated Dominicans, so eager is he to avert from himself any suspicion of disloyalty to the Church. Let us read a little of his letter to Conrad Peutinger, a fellow Imperial Councilor, and also a close friend of Luther:

> I was aware that you have very little time for reading anybody's letters, honored sir, nor have I myself much more time for writing any; but I am induced thereto by John Faber, a theologian of the Dominican Order, whom the more I observe the more I find to be a man far different from some others of his Order. For, besides his solid learning, his integrity of character, and his gentlemanly demeanor, I find him to be a man of great influence on account of his wisdom and good judgment. Frequently have we discussed between ourselves a method of putting an end to this tragedy of Luther without causing widespread tumult. . . . That affair has gone to greater lengths than I like, but I think the evil can still be remedied, and certainly it will be more amenable to cure than if it be any longer drawn out by additions to those by whom it was begun. I very much desire to see it remedied, lest the evil, which has been suppressed for a time, may break out again with greater virulence hereafter, as is wont to be the case with doctors, who drive away a fever with a draft without previously having purged the parts from which the fever originated, or who allow a wound to close without having sufficiently evacuated the pus. To some it would seem that it were best to quell the whole difficulty by violent measures, and from this Faber does not much dissent, only that he fears that severity might not be successful. He says that it is not enough to strive vigorously in the direction whither our desires invite us, but that many things are to be well considered. First, we must have such regard for the dignity and authority of the Roman Pontiff, whom all who love sincerely Christ rightly revere as His Supreme Vicar, so that the truth of the Gospel may suffer no loss. Nor do I doubt that it is the desire of our Leo at length to consider himself happy when he shall everywhere behold the teaching of his Leader flourishing. He [Faber] claims that what Luther deserves, or those who are his admirers, is not the sole consideration, but rather what is conducive to the restoration of public tranquillity. Who will put their hands to work against this evil, and with what

remedies will they cure it, is of great importance. Some people are mixing themselves in this matter who render the evil twice as bad by their foolish overzealousness, having regard not so much for the Pope's authority as for their own interests. In a word, they so behave that they injure literature and the languages quite as much as they harm Luther. . . . I perceive that the affair has been treated hitherto in a manner not at all to the liking of prudent men. Even if Luther had written nothing but what was true, yet he has written it in such a way as to make one think he grudged the truth its due. On the other hand, those who have opposed him have so conducted the matter publicly that, even if they had the very best cause, they would have harmed it by their injudicious patronage. Luther has been admonished to stop writing and to moderate his violence; but I hear that he is every day writing more savagely. Some have been advised to conduct the affair with more moderate measures, while others have so acted that they seem to be in collusion with Luther. . . . It is not for such as I am to form a judgment about the Bulls of Pontiffs; but there are some who looked for that gentleness in the Bull which the papal legate has brought with him, worthy of the one who wields on earth the offices of a most tender Christ, and worthy of the mind of Leo himself, who has hitherto been most indulgent. However, they do not blame this on him, but on those who are his instigators. "Now even if," he [Faber] says, "the works of Luther were entirely extirpated by this savage method, and that even he himself were put out of the way, it is still to be feared that the trouble might be aggravated rather than ended; and for each one put away many might arise, so that the matter would terminate in conflict and schism." Briefly, this tempest requires some special means which will moderate the course of the affair, so that it will neither be overwhelmed by the waves, nor dashed to pieces on some rocky shore; and so that, as they say, while avoiding Scylla, it may not be hurled on Charybdis, but so cut the evil in two that this serpent may not be again able to revive. Therefore our Faber thinks that the entire matter ought to be left in the hands of judges who are learned, upright, and above suspicion; not that the Roman Pontiff is to be humbled and subjected to the judgment of anyone else, but that he [the Pope] will deem it an act of piety on the part of any man who is willing to fill such an office, after he has recognized that it will be conducive to the general tranquillity of the Christian religion. But of the wisdom of his plan he [Faber] will speak with you personally more at length; and if it meets with your approbation you will add thereto your own prudent counsel, so that something may be accomplished at the Diet of Worms which will win the praise of all good men. Although I do not doubt that John Faber will be most welcome to you on account of his own merits, yet I entreat you again and again that he may be all the more so by reason of my own personal commendation, for you could not oblige Erasmus so much by any other kindness. Now,

> where are they who exclaim that Erasmus is unjust to that Order? Such an intellect, such an erudition, and such a character as his please me exceedingly, no matter what the habit. Farewell. Cologne, November 9, 1520.[1]

Just at this moment he received a letter from a Bohemian nobleman named Artlebus of Boskowitz, who had openly declared himself for Luther. In his letter he vigorously urges Erasmus to do the same, and gives the reasons for his action. What these reasons were we can gather from the reply of Erasmus, of which we shall give a synopsis. Having paid his respects in his usual manner to the monks without making the admissions about them that the preceding letter contains, he says that their attacks on Luther have been injudicious, and that it was hopeless to bring back to the fold the Bohemian separatists as long as the monks were allowed to manage things. But he blames those who have criticized the Pope, in that he deserved far more respect than he was accorded at their hands. Without going into the question of the supremacy of Rome he shows that the authority of that See over others is salutary, because it thus serves to restrain other bishops, and even princes, from oppressing their subjects. He stands up manfully for the present Pope, and insists that many things are done by the Roman Curia without the Pontiff's knowledge and desire. To the Bohemian nobleman's invitation to join with Luther he declares that he would readily do so were he able to convince himself that Luther was with the Catholic Church.[2]

So we see that he was beginning to cast his anchor to windward in case Luther should be quelled. Expediency was now to be the keynote of his utterances. That is what he means when he says to Jonas, after the Diet of Worms: "And so with a certain holy craftiness must we yield to the times, not, however, to the betrayal of the treasure of evangelical truth, in which alone lies our hope of restoring the at present corrupt public morals." [3]

That he tempered his pen to suit his correspondent we learn from a letter to the devoutly Catholic Archbishop Warham:

> Luther has excited fearful tumults; and I do not see any end, unless Christ will turn our indiscretion to a good account, just as the owl [of Pallas] was wont to render lucky the foolish plans of the Athenians. I wish that Luther had been silent entirely on certain topics, or that he had written of them in a different way. Now, I fear that in avoiding Scylla we may fall into a more pernicious Charybdis. If they should succeed who for the sake of their bellies and autocratic power dare everything, nothing remains but for me to write the epitaph of a Christ who will never come to life again. Gone is the flame of evangelical charity, gone is the little star of Gospel illumination, gone is the source of heavenly doctrine, so disgracefully do they fawn on princes and on those from whom they expect benefits, to the highest injury of Christian truth. For myself I so regulate every act that I do not entirely

[1] Eras. Ep. 1156. [2] *Ibid.*, 1183. [3] *Ibid.*, 1202, ll. 285-7. (May 10, 1521.)

abandon good literature or the glory of Christ; nor yet do I mix myself up in seditious proceedings. There shines forth good hope from the equitable kindness of our Leo, so that it might come about that he would consider the glory of Christ of greater moment than his own, or rather that he would then deem himself a happy Pontiff if he referred all things to His glory alone. . . . May 24, 1521.[4]

But at last the open hostility manifested towards him at Louvain by Egmondanus, Latomus, and Vincent the Dominican, was too much for him: he decided to leave the University and betake himself elsewhere, first to Anderlecht, and afterwards to Mechlin and Brussels, in each of which places he made a short stay. He alleged to Bernard Buchon that his reason for leaving Louvain was that he had long been sick there and went to the country for the purpose of regaining his health. Incidentally he gives us a list of the good friends he was leaving behind in the University, among whom are James Ceratinus, Hermann of Westphalia, Adrian, Rutger Rescius, Conrad Goclen, Adrian Barland, Melchior Trevir, and Louis Vives. But the real reason for his leaving Louvain was evidently that he would not write against Luther to satisfy Egmondanus and the rest, and this for many reasons that he mentions in a letter to his old Italian friend Bombace, who was now secretary to Cardinal Pucci at Rome. We give these reasons to the reader for what they may be worth, premising that some of them do, while others of them do not, commend themselves to us. Incidentally we might add that, from the internal evidence contained in this letter, Bombace had hinted that he somewhat expected Erasmus to have taken up the cudgels against Luther in behalf of Pope Leo. Erasmus proceeds as follows:

I have been neither unaware nor forgetful of how much I owe to Leo's kindness to me, for it has been borne in on me in many ways. But I have not been quite so silent in his defense as you think. In the first place, I strove hard to prevent this tumult from arising, and, when it had arisen, I tried hard to calm it. Eventually I made an effort to have this wide-spread conflagration disturb as little as possible the tranquillity of the world. My effort had especial relation to the dignity of the Roman Pontiff, and to so finishing this tragedy that the evil, once repressed, should not burst out anew. When this endeavor was not sufficiently successful, by reason of the private cavilings of certain persons who were more intent on special than on public interests, I warned many, both by letter and personal exhortation, not to mix themselves up in this affair. Now there are many reasons why I have not hitherto done battle with Luther by publishing books against him. All these I need not recount here, but this is the principal one: that I have not had the leisure to read over what Luther has written, so busy am I in revising my own works. And you see what a voluminous writer he is; nor is he alone, for he has a hundred helpers. Nor indeed is it sufficient to read over his writings once, for they must

[4] *Ibid.*, 1205.

be read and reread. And even this would be insufficient. Many here and there have written against him, some of whom I should have to peruse in order to perform thoroughly the task I had undertaken. And again, what perhaps I ought not to mention, while I am summoned to do this, there is not enough regard had for the proverb "every man to that for which he is best fitted." [5] The business is full of danger, and I am more exercised in other fields of endeavor. Add to this, that it would be only fair to me, tired out as I am with the publishing of so many books, that I should be given a respite such that I might be permitted to enjoy my studies at leisure. My advancing years are demanding this, and my exhausting labors, spent hitherto in assisting the interests of general learning, are deserving of it. This affair is such a one that if I once enter on it the rest of my life will have to be given up to it. O my dear Bombace, it is easy to say, "Write against Luther," but to do this there are more things needed than for the building of a wagon, as Hesiod says. I see how various, how captious are the judgments of men, especially in this age, than which there has scarcely ever been a more contentious one. On many points the cisalpine universities differ from the transalpine ones. Moreover, the theologians of the same university say one thing in their public diatribes and books, but quite another in their actual conversations. At the same time it is very difficult to so temper your pen that you will have due regard for men's dignity, and, at the same time, not to do harm to the glory of Christ; that you will so please lay princes, as not to displease in any way Christ the Prince of all. Now, if this thing can be put an end to by books, such a swarm of books is coming out every day that there is no need of Erasmus. If there is need of clamorings, there is no lack of loud mouths. There have been more than enough firebrands everywhere; and in the edicts issued there has been nothing omitted that might inspire terror. But I fear that by such means the evil will merely be smothered for the present rather than extinguished, only to break out soon with greater violence, a thing which I would abhor and vehemently wish that it might not occur. No country more sincerely supports the pontifical dignity than mine; but the manner in which that dignity has been defended by some has made it hateful. If they had not lost their heads, the affair would not have reached the pass it has. Nay, even if now they would only keep silent for three months, Luther with all his books would fade from memory, and as far as he is concerned the world would run along without the least change. September 23, 1521.[6]

Then he goes on to say that he had tried to obtain from Aleander the Pope's legate the privilege of reading Luther's works, but in vain, since Aleander would not grant it without special and direct permission from the Pope himself. He alleges that he was afraid to read them without permission, lest some of his enemies might send to Rome the news that

[5] τὸν ἵππον εἰς πεδίον. (See his Adage 782.)

[6] Eras. Ep. 1236.

he was reading the works of Luther, which had been forbidden to the faithful. Again he says how much he is indebted to Leo X, and that, if he shall only live for three or four years longer, the Pope shall have no occasion to call him ungrateful. And he adds that the remarkable goodness of Leo merits this fully at the hands of all men of letters. Some may think, he imagines, that they can praise Leo more appropriately than he, but he insists that none will do it with greater zeal; and that, although nature has denied him eloquence, his love and affection will take its place. Some, he says, have labored to present to the world a picture of Leo calculated to inspire awe, while he, on the contrary, has striven to make everybody love rather than fear him. Then he brings in the sad doings of the monks with regard to himself, and tells how every work, even of Luther's, is attributed to himself, or, at least, that Luther got his perverse ideas from him. Many things which his adversaries have set afoot against Luther had not been entirely approved by him, and some of them he would wish to see stopped. "Why, they have almost severed the ancient friendship which existed between Aleander and myself by their poisonous tongues," he exclaims. Then he intimates that already Aleander is sorry for some things that he said about Erasmus, but that they have obtained such currency that it is impossible to undo the harm. He finishes up in the following impassioned manner, pledging unswerving loyalty to the Sovereign Pontiff:

> So, my most learned Bombace, if Leo X will not desert me in my innocence against those most audacious calumniators, I will not be found wanting either in my sincerity for the Christian religion, or in my regard for his personal dignity.[7]

At the end of this letter he tells Bombace that he is uncertain of his movements for the future, not knowing whether or not to go and reside at Basle permanently, but adroitly throwing out the hint that he might be led to go to Rome, there to dwell for the rest of his days in the society of the learned and amid the rich libraries which there abound. He says that he feels better for having spent the summer in the country, but that the threat of war thereabouts, and the invitation of Aleander, a man to whom he attributes equal wisdom in the management of affairs and good judgment in literature, may persuade him to seek a haven of rest in Rome.[8]

We may compare this letter to Bombace, an Italian who was a part of the Roman Curia, with that former letter to Jodocus Jonas and the one to Conrad Peutinger, both of whom were personal friends of Luther, and we shall observe at once the differences in tone.[9] His sympathies at this time undoubtedly lay with the Lutheran party, while he well recognized that his interests lay with Luther's adversaries. He realized that, to pass over to Luther, he would have to give up all his financial advantages and prospects for the future, and associate himself with a set of men very learned but very poor as far as this world's goods were concerned. On the other hand he saw himself associated

[7] *Idem.* [8] *Idem.* [9] See pages 164 *sq.* and 182 *sqq.* of Volume Two.

in the defense of the Church with a set of theologians whose ability he respected but whose monastic habit he fiercely hated. He had to make his choice, however, or be ground between the upper and nether millstone, and his choice was that which we should have guessed from our previous knowledge of the workings of his mind—the choice of expediency and self-interest. From this time on he was against Luther, that is, whenever he was challenged to state his position; but it still took several years to make him come out as the champion of the Church. All the time the pressure put upon him to openly repudiate Luther was tremendous. All his best friends urged this course, but he shrank from the avowal as long as possible. Lord Mountjoy, one of his oldest patrons, whose beneficence he was still enjoying, wrote to him to inform him how he was regarded in England, where he was now considered an out-and-out Lutheran. Here his interests were in danger, and he hastened at once to exculpate himself as follows:

> Illustrious Sir. The more sincere your regard for me, and the more friendly a Mæcenas you have been to me, make me grieve particularly that I have not been so satisfactory a friend to you as the nobility of your mind deserved. You write me that somebody, I know not whom, has spread the rumor in your country that I am not only an admirer of the Lutheran party, but also an aider and even originator of it; and you urge me to clear myself of this charge by issuing a work against Luther. To show you that this is as great a lie as to announce that Erasmus has wings, I will tell you in a few words the source from which this rumor sprang.
>
> There are some here who are deeply incensed against me because I am credited with having introduced into their branch of studies the languages and secular literature. Before the world had even heard Luther's name these people were seeking a weapon to use in avenging on me their own chagrin, but those who had first started the rumor have not yet convinced themselves of what they have tried to convince others. They have striven with extraordinary lies to prejudice against me Jerome Aleander, the Apostolic Nuncio, a very learned man to whom I was bound by the ties of an ancient and most pleasant acquaintance. Certain malicious pamphlets began to fly around here and there, what they were I know not, but some of the Germans fastened the authorship of them on me in order to ward off suspicion from themselves. In a word, they persuaded this man [Aleander], who, though he is keen and sincere, is somewhat credulous, to believe that I felt and spoke about him in a far from friendly manner; nor were there lacking those who would thwart our reconciliation by bringing up new charges.
>
> However, hold this to be more certain than a Sybilline oracle, that in all the books of Luther or the Lutherans there is not one syllable which is mine, or which I was aware about the writing of. Nor have I favored him, unless anyone favors a man by seeking to persuade him from his intention and by trying with might and main to prevent him from publishing his books. I was the first of all to

prophesy that this matter would terminate in serious disturbances throughout the world. I did not enter into any secret agreement either with Luther or anyone of his party; and so far was I from giving encouragement to any one of them that I deterred all those that I could, both by my writings and my verbal advice, from such a dangerous attempt. I had only disapproved of the rash tumults caused by certain persons amongst the people, until it was sufficiently evident whither Luther was tending.

Everyone admits that ecclesiastical discipline has fallen away from the sincerity of the Gospel, that Christian people are much oppressed in many ways, and that the consciences of men are entangled in various perplexities. For such evils it seemed to good and learned men that Luther was about to bring forward a remedy. And while everyone everywhere was wishing him well, I alone stood forth admonishing that he should guard his pen and treat the matter with evangelical gentleness. No one knows better than yourself how much I always had peace at heart, and how hateful to me was war. So that if Luther had written truly about everything, yet would his seditious freedom have displeased me. I should prefer to be deceived in some things rather than to fight for the truth by throwing the world into disorder. And in contentions of this kind, when after bloody quarrels the matter is talked over, it is found as often as not that both sides held the same opinion, and were only fighting over words. I have always favored evangelical learning and the glory of Christ, and, so far, I have favored secular learning that it might serve Christ. I have been grieved that too much importance was attached to argumentative theology; it was displeasing to me to have the ancient theology displaced.

This has been the object of my lucubrations. Nor am I sorry that such has been my design. How was I to foresee that Luther was to arise, who would make bad use of my writings? For they alleged that Luther had imbibed his ideas from my books. But by what means can I prevent anyone from making wrong use of my writings, since many have made wrong use even of the Gospels? And yet, if some divinity had foretold to me that this age would arise, either I would not have written about certain things at all, or I would have written about them differently: not that I had written what is pernicious, but that not everything is to be frankly spoken at all times. . . . If he is a Lutheran who defends what Luther has written or may in future write, who more insane than I were I to desire to be considered a Lutheran, since I will not even read his books? Or what cause exists why I should cast in my lot with such a dangerous faction? I was greatly amused at that critic who gathered from his conversation with Luther that he was only a butt and a blockhead, and unskilled in all theology. Would that Luther had the same amount of moderation that he has of theological erudition! And would that he had favored Christian concord as much as he declares himself to be able to accomplish in sacred

writings! But where is the good judgment of that fellow who with you is deemed, and really is, most skilled in theological matters, when he publicly in the palace declared Erasmus to be inferior to Luther in the sacred sciences by no less an interval than the latter is excelled by Erasmus in eloquence? And with what assurance do they now wish to commit me with Luther who have hitherto prated that I was nothing but a grammarian?

But suppose that Luther were illiterate. What then follows? That would be a fine conclusion of his, who, as you write, while looking at you with a placid countenance, hinted that if Luther were unlearned his books must have originated with me. Germany abounds in learned and eloquent men, and I, so far away from him, was the only one who could help him in his writing. What need was there to reply to those foolish remarks of his? But they are great personages who say these things. Yet neither rank nor riches breeds wisdom. It were more profitable for such people to talk in their banquets about the hunt, rather than about these things which they do not understand. Luther acknowledged all his books in the presence of the Emperor; I have never published anything to which I did not prefix my name. I have never claimed for myself the work of another, nor have I printed what was mine under the signature of anyone else. From obscenity, from sedition, and from risky assertions I have always abstained; and I have always submitted my works to the judgment of the Church; and listened willingly to the advice of learned men: I am prepared even now to repair my error, if in anything I have offended learned and serious persons. I except a few, however, who have given manifest evidences of impotent hatred and an impaired judgment. It was never my intention to contend with the rulers of the Church. If they prescribe for me what will redound to the glory of Christ, I will willingly embrace it; but if it be something that will deservedly displease me, I will endure it, provided that it be not openly impious. They have their master by whom they stand or fall; and I consider it to be right to conceal what is true, if there be no hope of profit therefrom, just as Christ was silent before Herod. Nor am I so rash as to wish to go contrary to the edicts of the highest princes, poor little worm that I am. If they ask counsel of me, and answer for my safety, I will give it in accordance with my candor; and if it be not wise at least it will be honest. . . . If they do not ask my advice I will keep still; and as far as I am permitted I will subserve the business of the Gospels; and if anything happens other than I would wish it I will pray Christ to turn the minds of the doers to better things.

As to your statement that it rests in my power to calm all this tumult, would that what your lordship writes were the truth, for then this tragedy would have never arisen! Here they exclaim that I have lost my pen. Nay, I have my pen, but there are so many circumstances that dissuade me from using it. To call Luther a dolt is very easy; but to defend the faith with suitable arguments

is certainly most difficult to me. And so far others have not succeeded very well. Yet would I cheerfully gird myself for the task were I certain that some of those who, under the pretext of defending the faith, have their minds on worldly affairs, would use their victory for the welfare of the Christian religion. However, I will go to Basle, resolved that, after I have finished what I have in hand, I will attempt something for the allaying of this dissension, and at the same time serve to show my own attitude on this matter. And yet I cannot see how it belongs to me to undertake such an arduous task, when there are so many learned, mighty, and influential men, and men of the highest authority, who have already assumed this as their province. It is a very cunning assumption of theirs who say, "He who is silent seems to consent." If they are silent who do not write, then is the consent very general. And yet I have been silent in such a way that I have aroused all the Lutherans against me.

But to make an end, my dearest Mæcenas, you need have no doubt of your Erasmus, for neither piety, nor religion, nor morals, nor public tranquillity, is harmed by my writings. I am able to prove my innocence, but the tongues of men I cannot control. They who prate about such matters will one day have to render an account to God of either their rashness or their malice. If I can win little approbation from men for my efforts, I surely trust that Christ will approve of them; and if this age be little pleased with my labors, posterity will form a juster judgment of them. Finally, it is something to have won the approbation of Christ alone. I have written this hastily and rapidly, having by chance secured a courier. . . . From Anderlecht, ⟨c. July? 5⟩, 1521.[10]

We glean from this letter to Mountjoy in what estimation Erasmus was now held in England. Lee's work had told heavily against him, and he saw himself, once so popular, now regarded with distrust and dissatisfaction. Lord Mountjoy had told him plainly that he was suspected of leaning towards Luther, and that the only way to stop this increasing hostility towards him that was now manifesting itself in England was to employ his pen against Luther. Erasmus brings up the old grievance of his personal enemies who, he claims, are responsible for this accusation; and he seeks to becloud the issue by insisting that this evident animosity springs from those who object to the introduction of original research into the theological field. But in his heart he knows this is not so, and he knows that all his particular friends know that such an assertion is untenable. Not one of his contemporaries, so far as we have been able to ascertain, has ever made such a statement—not Luther, not Melancthon, not More, not Pace, not Bombace, not Sadoleti, nor any other of his English, Italian, or German friends. He was the first to make the statement that the New Learning was held responsible for the present turmoil, and after him it has been repeated *ad nauseam* by every writer on those times. It certainly was not believed

[10] Eras. Ep. 1219.

in England where some of the most ardent friends of the New Learning dwelt; and even Henry VIII was never opposed to it when he stood forth as the champion of religion. On the contrary, we have Erasmus' testimony to the fact that Henry was the friend and fosterer of every kind of sacred and profane learning, not only appreciating it in others, but being justly proud of his own attainments therein. And it is perhaps the most convincing piece of evidence we have that the English king, with his nobility and the entire hierarchy, were out of sympathy in his temporizing policy regarding Luther, that Henry himself entered the lists against the Wittemberg monk, and acquitted himself therein with tolerable success, while Erasmus writhed and sweated in pusillanimous irresolution.[11] Writing to Richard Pace on July 5, 1521, Erasmus says of Luther: "If, however, he had written in the most reverent spirit, still I had no inclination to risk my life for the truth. It is not everyone who has the courage for martyrdom; and I fear I should imitate St. Peter should any outbreak occur."[12] But it may serve in showing the wavering state of his mind to quote what he said a few days afterward to Peter Barbirius: "I would gladly give up, not only my good name, but even my life, to bring calmness out of this most disastrous storm."[13]

He was torn with fears for himself and suspicions of the motives of others. In a letter to Nicholas Everard, Governor of Holland, Zeeland, and Friesland at this same period, he calls Aleander, the Pope's legate, a "complete maniac, a bad, foolish man";[14] but writing to Lord Mountjoy, as we have just seen, he calls the same Aleander "a very learned man, . . . keen and sincere, but somewhat credulous." Erasmus was extremely sensitive as to what the world might be saying of him and caught at every rumor. His dictum that Aleander was credulous is somewhat amusing when he himself was perhaps never excelled in a childlike acceptance of what lesser men would hesitate to believe. For instance, in the above letter to Everard he seriously writes:

> . . . I hear they are now using poison, and at Paris some who were open defenders of Luther were suddenly put out of the way. . . . This is an art in which Aleander has great skill. At Cologne he used very earnestly to invite me to breakfast; but the more he pressed, the more persistent was I in excusing myself.[15]

Compare this statement with the fact that a short time afterwards he and Aleander foregathered in the same inn at Louvain, eating and drinking together, and apparently enjoying all their old-time friendship. They passed part of the night in learned conservation, and Erasmus told him of all the troubles he had endured from Egmondanus and Vincent the Dominican. The latter had that very morning delivered a sermon in which he had styled both Erasmus and Luther as enemies of the Church, and had promised the congregation another discourse

[11] That Henry was a friend of the New Learning and himself a scholar, Seebohm asserts. See *Era of the Protestant Revolution,* p. 84. N. Y., 1875.
[12] Eras Ep. 1218, ll. 31-4.
[13] *Ibid.,* 1225, ll. 316-7. (August 13, 1521.)
[14] *Ibid.,* 1188.
[15] *Idem.*

on the same subject. When Erasmus had informed Aleander of this fact, the latter, in his capacity of pontifical nuncio, sent word to Vincent to cease defaming Erasmus, and for the future to confine himself strictly to the preaching of the Gospel.[16] More than this, hearing that some monks of Louvain and Cologne were preparing to issue a pamphlet against his old friend, he kept the matter in mind and, when the book was presented him for his approval, he would not even receive it.

After staying at Anderlecht for three months Erasmus went on to Bruges, where the Emperor was holding his court, and here our scholar appeared in his capacity of Imperial Councilor. It was here that he saw Henry VIII's famous work on the Seven Sacraments, which that monarch in his rôle of the Pope's champion had just issued. It happened that the Pope's legate Caracciola came into the room where Erasmus was waiting in attendance, bearing in his hand a copy of the book, which Erasmus asked to see. Observng King Henry's name in autograph at the foot of the first page, he returned the book with a smile and said to the legate, "How I envy Luther such an adversary!" The legate regarded this as somewhat equivocal and intimated as much, whereupon Erasmus hastened to reassure him, adding at the same time, "And I congratulate the Pope on such a defender." In this instance he seems to have sacrificed his wit in order to win credit for sincerity, for he relates the incident as proof positive that he never wrote Henry's book for him, a charge which was made against him by some friends of Luther.[17]

From all this it is proper to infer that he would not have been welcome in England at that moment. It is also a legitimate inference that just as More did not side with Erasmus against Lee, so he did not side with him in his attacks on Standish. It is also probable that a silence ensued between More and Erasmus just at this period, for we have no letters; or, if More did write, perhaps the letters were more critical of his utterances than he enjoyed. All that we can say for certain is that it was a strange silence at a moment when the whole world was talking both favorably and adversely of Luther, and to a lesser degree of Erasmus, and we are inclined to the opinion that Lord Mountjoy's entreaty that he write against Luther represented the attitude, not only of the whole English court and the hierarchy, but that of More as well. Wherever he turned he was met with the same request, that he write against Luther, and his continued refusal was set down to his sympathy with the Reformer. So it is not to be much wondered at that Louvain as a permanent residence no longer seemed desirable, and that in the early part of this year 1521, as we have noted, he left that city and University. All this hostility so suddenly manifesting itself towards him everywhere that he turned—in England, Brabant, Germany, and even Italy—had not helped his always frail health, and his old enemy the gravel had revisited him with savage viciousness. But he gritted his teeth and continued to lash the monks and the divines of Louvain, insisting that their hostility to him was due to their hatred of the New Learning. And he could not see his own inconsistency when

[16] *Ibid.*, 1342. [17] *Idem.*

in his writings he gives us facts which contradict his own statements. This very University of Louvain was managed by members of various Religious Orders, principally Dominican and Carmelite. They had made it one of the four leading universities of Europe, and had welcomed eagerly the New Learning, many of them being engaged in the work of recovering and restoring the forgotten and vitiated classics. In these pages we have given an account of the establishing therein of the College of the Three Languages, in the founding of which Erasmus himself took a prominent part. He it was who told us all this, and he it was who added that "At Louvain you will see so many boys, so many young men, striving no less successfully than ardently to win praise for their knowledge of Greek and Latin literature."[18] Erasmus represents some of the divines there as being mere heretic hunters and not at all interested in scholarship. But the facts are against him, for we know from contemporary sources that the faculty welcomed scholars from all parts of the world, and Erasmus himself has recorded their names. In the long list which he has left us we notice the name of J. Louis Vives, a man of admirable learning who, on account of being suspected of heretical tendencies in his native Spain, had to fly the long arm of the Inquisition. But he was received and made welcome at Louvain in spite of this fact, and dwelt in friendly amity with all the faculty of the University until invited to accept a lectureship at Oxford. This is a remarkable fact about Erasmus, that, whenever he diverges from the line of strict veracity, it is not to the writings of his contemporaries, but to his own, that we look for the necessary refutation.

This year of 1521 was signalized by the death of Pope Leo X on the first day of December, at the age of forty-six, after a pontificate of eight years. Like all the great men who in the world's history have sat in the seats of the mighty, he was lauded by some to the skies, and by others consigned with maledictions to the bottomless pit. Sovereign Pontiff at the period of the world's greatest crisis, it was his lot to represent the constituted authority of the Catholic Church at the moment when it was being attacked by Luther. In addition, he was a member of one of the ruling families of the day, the powerful De' Medicis, with all that such implies of warring interests, clashing ambitions, and racial enmities. In a day when one state was arrayed against another, and the great struggle was to secure the strongest allies against a time of trouble, it is not to be wondered at that contemporary historians were too nearly interested in the events that were happening around them to be entirely devoid of bias. Hence we see that they differ widely as the poles in their estimate of his character; and as a consequence the writers for and against him are equally unreliable. Perhaps the most nearly correct estimate of Leo X is that he was a man of average abilities, of elevated tastes, and of humane ideals. Regarding his abilities, we know that he was conversant with the Greek and Latin classics and could turn a verse neatly in either Latin or Italian. While he was yet only a Cardinal, his palace was thrown open to all who made any claim to literary prominence, a practice which he continued on a much

[18] *Ibid.*, 1091, ll. 38-40.

larger scale after he had become Pope; and one of his very earliest acts as Pontiff was to reëstablish on a wider and firmer basis the Roman Academy. It is not our purpose to enter here on any panegyric of Leo X, for all of his modern biographers admit his services to learning. With regard to his tastes we may say that they were those which were customary with the princes of his time. He was not averse to the excitement of the hunting field, and found pleasure in the pursuit of military glory until he had attained his ambitions. As to his moral character, although he has not escaped innuendo, there is no authenticated account of any looseness whatsoever. We may accept Luther's statement on this point in his famous letter to Leo himself, written on April 6, 1520, in which he says:

> I must however most explicitly assure you that, whenever I have had occasion to mention you, I have never done so but in the best and most magnificent terms. Had I done otherwise I could not in any way retain my self-respect, and should have by my own consent ratified the opinion of those people concerning me, in which case I would most willingly make a recantation of my rashness and wickedness. . . . The unblemished record of your life is too celebrated and august to be attacked by any man even of the highest standing in any way whatsoever.[19]

That this was no empty compliment is borne out by the rest of the letter, but more particularly by the following:

> I must, however, acknowledge my total abhorrence of your See, the so-called Roman Curia, which, neither you nor any man can deny, is more corrupt than either Babylon or Sodom, and, according to my best information, is sunk in the most deplorable and notorious wickedness.[20]

This testimony to Leo's moral character, which Luther at no time ever repudiated, ought to settle definitely this point in the consciences of future historians. We may also give the testimony of Erasmus on this matter for whatever it may be considered to be worth. He had personally met Leo when the latter was a young patrician, both in Brabant, and afterwards during his residence at Rome; and he wrote to the Pontiff his appreciation of him, and not only to Leo himself, which, coming from so consummate a flatterer, might not carry great weight with us; but he many times expressed his high opinion of him to others. That Leo was no narrow bigot is evident from the fact that he sided with Reuchlin against some of the leading members of the Dominican Orders. That he was inclined to deal generously with Luther is clear from the fact that he sent one of Luther's own countrymen, Charles von Miltitz, to treat with him in place of an Italian envoy, so that racial animosity might not enter in to prevent an agreement. He was mild by nature, and was always readier to use measures of gentleness than of rigor in the vexed question of Luther. As early as February 3, 1519, he had instructed Father Gabriel, Vice-General of the Augustinian

[19] DeWette, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 498. [20] *Ibid.*, p. 499.

Order and Luther's superior officer, to employ his efforts and authority in restraining Luther, and for this end to enlist learned men who might placate him.

"If you do this promptly," said the Pope, "we believe it will not be difficult to extinguish this spreading flame; but if you delay and the evil gains strength, I apprehend that it will be no longer possible to remedy it when we wish." [21]

If he failed in his efforts to preserve the concord of the religious world so rudely threatened by Luther, the fault did not lie with him personally, but must be equally shared by Luther and his friends on the one hand, and the Roman Curia on the other. In comparing him with his contemporaries, we are disposed to yield him a high position. It is impossible to characterize any man by a single word; but, if we were compelled to so characterize Leo and the other shining lights with whom he had dealings, we should be inclined to call Luther erratic, Erasmus selfish, Henry VIII voluptuous, Elector Frederick wily, Charles V arbitrary, Francis I unstable, and Leo X worldly. Compared with any one of them, Leo shows a more amiable and attractive personality; and though we have called him worldly, when we reflect on the sacred office he held, we feel that as a temporal ruler he was no more worldly than any of those with whom he had political relations. Apart from these considerations he stands out as one of the world's great characters, and the age of Leo X will always be pointed out as a golden age.

[21] Quoted from de Burigni, *Vie d'Erasme,* Vol. II, p. 60.

CHAPTER XIII

ACCESSION OF ADRIAN VI: HIS CORRESPONDENCE WITH ERASMUS

From this time forward we discern a change in the attitude of Erasmus towards what he had so often styled the Lutheran tragedy. Slowly, and without any apparent enthusiasm, he seems to fall away from Luther and to line himself up once more, with as good grace as possible, among the defenders of the Church and the Pope. There may have been other reasons for this, but the most evident one was the election to the pontifical throne of his old professor Adrian, who was a teacher at Louvain, and who occupied the papal chair under the title of Adrian VI. This Pontiff, who was born at Utrecht in 1459, was about seven years the senior of Erasmus. Lowly in his origin, he had raised himself by his talents and learning to the chair of Theology at the University of Louvain. Later he was appointed tutor to the young Prince Charles, afterwards the celebrated Emperor Charles V, who recognized his sterling virtues, but especially his executive abilities, by sending him to Spain as his personal representative, where he was made successively Bishop of Tortosa, Cardinal, and, after the death of Cardinal Ximenes in 1517, Regent of that country. All biographers, both Protestant and Catholic, attest that he was an honest man, of strong moral principles, totally unselfish, and entirely devoted to the interests of the Church. That he was a foreigner of the hated Germanic stock was enough in itself to make him unpopular at Rome, where racial antipathies were just as deep-seated as in Germany. Simple in his tastes to the point of asceticism, he formed a marked contrast to his predecessor Leo X in almost every phase of his character; and the sudden change from a Medicean prince to a plebeian, who labored under the further defect that he was not an Italian, caused the new Pope to be very coldly regarded by the Roman Curia. Austere by nature, and with a character too stable to be impaired by the meretriciousness of court life, he was spoken of with bated breath by the Vatican officials, who hence awaited his arrival from Spain, where he had been delayed for several months after being notified of his election, with a certain degree of anxiety. They knew him to be a man of positive views and decided convictions, with a reserve that amounted almost to coldness; and so they were prepared to be critical and uncordial. Erasmus heard the news of Adrian's election, we are led to believe, with mingled pleasure and apprehension—pleasure in that the new Pope was a fellow-countryman and a sort of old acquaintance, apprehension in that Adrian might insist on his writing against Luther, and at the same time give a hint to the Emperor to compel a quick obedience.

Erasmus was also aware that his conduct in the matter hitherto might not have conciliated for him the good will of Adrian; and when he thought of the numerous enemies he had made who might whisper into the ear of the new Pontiff things that might be prejudicial to him, he decided to forestall all such attempts by writing himself first:

> Most blessed Father. Anyone else might have had recourse to the assistance of the rhetorical arts to congratulate you on your new dignity, than which there is none greater on earth. But I will not do so, because I am well aware with what reluctance you have accepted the office so unexpectedly thrust upon you. Moreover, I would seem to congratulate you very inappropriately at a time like this when you yourself are filled with anxiety and distress, since you realize how difficult it is to fulfil the duties of the position in such a way as to win the approbation of Christ, to whom an account of your doings must one day be given. . . . But the less reason there exists for personally felicitating you, the greater reason is there for publicly congratulating the entire Christian world, since the present tempest in the world's affairs especially demanded such a pilot as yourself. For many reasons I am induced to hope that you will use the office divinely delegated to you for no other purpose than the cause of Jesus Christ and that of His flock; and may He grant that your most holy endeavors may turn out successful, for without His favor every mortal effort is fruitless. As a pledge of my zeal and affection towards you, I send you my edition of *Arnobius,* which happened to be the work I had in hand when this most joyful news was brought to me about the elevation of Adrian VI to be our ruler and guide; and I shall speak more freely and fully when the opportunity offers. The sincerity of my conscience and your own wise judgment are well known to me; but, since I observe what influence evil tongues possess in this age, it seems right for me to furnish your Holiness with a sure antidote against their virulence, so that, if anything has been told you about Erasmus, you will flatly reject it, or, if you have your doubts, that you will suspend judgment until you have received my defense. For myself I have no doubt that I shall find in you a most just judge before whom to reply to the calumnies of these people. Although I feel that you would act thus of your own accord, yet the unceasing wickedness of some of these persons makes me thus throw out this hint, even if I make no special request on the matter. So far, in what refers to the interests of Christ, I have shown a mind worthy of a true believer, and shall continue to do so to the last day of my life. If by neither side shall I be able to make my cause approved, I have a fixed confidence in Christ that, seeing my conscience, he will approve it. Let me not be considered to be speaking from the Delphic tripod, as the saying is, but from the bottom of a sincere heart.
>
> The more prolix preface of my *Arnobius* will compensate for the brevity of this letter. May the Lord Jesus the Protector of all,

POPE ADRIAN VI

Houbraken

who will ever assist you as His vice-gerent here, long preserve your Holiness to us. Basle, c. September, 1522.[1]

As usual, we see his first thought regarded his standing with Adrian, and what the latter thought of him. Adrian was a product of the University of Louvain and presumably in sympathy with those whom Erasmus affected to regard as his enemies. Hence it was in some doubt that he wrote to the new Pontiff and sent him his little gift of propitiation. This doubt was increased by Adrian's delay in answering, but whether this delay was due to a desire on the Pope's part to take the matter under advisement or not he had no means of knowing. After waiting as long as his poor frayed nerves would allow him, Erasmus wrote again and sent a second copy of the Arnobius:

Most blessed Father. I again send, through the public courier of Basle, this pledge of my affection for you, and of my prompt obedience to the Holy See, if perchance the little book which I sent you some time ago has not been delivered. At that time nothing else was at hand; when some better occasion falls out, I shall not fail in my duty to you. Never were the times more turbulent than at present, and it is most difficult to satisfy everybody. Assuredly I have hitherto satisfied my own conscience, for the which I hope at least that Christ will approve me. This is no trifling tempest in the affairs of the world, for everything is thrown into convulsions by armed force, by opinions, by partisanship, by factions, and by animosities. The world looks to you alone to restore serenity to human affairs. If your Holiness will command me, I will attempt by secret correspondence to show you a plan of mine, which, if not a wise one, is a trustworthy one, by which this evil may be so quenched that it will not easily revive. For it does not accomplish much to so stifle a thing by violence that presently it will break out again with greater danger, just as ulcers which are badly cured are wont to do. In mighty tempests even the most skilful pilots suffer themselves to be advised. Moses did not reject the counsel of Jethro, although I am not a Jethro; and in Horace Davus gives trusty advice to his master. If there be anything in it that you can employ, pray use it. If there be nothing of profit in it, it may be consigned to oblivion without any danger, since none but us two will know of it. Humble people like myself see and hear many things which are not to be disregarded which escape the attention of the great.

Especially do I think it should be seen to that the private animosities of no one shall harm the interests of Christ and the world in general, and that the authority of man shall be so maintained that it shall not hurt the authority of Jesus Christ, who alone lives yesterday, to-day, and forever. I myself at times have carried joking to extremes,[2] not anticipating such an age as this to arise, such was the tranquillity of those days. Now, because I see that Christianity

[1] Eras. Ep. 1310.

[2] "Nos olim quædam liberius lusimus."

is exposed to a great trial, we must in every possible way guard it, nor yield in any manner to private feelings. I do not want to speak gloomily; but I see more danger impending than I wish, or than many perceive. May Christ turn everything to a good issue!

This city of Basle, flourishing remarkably on account of its many advantages, is attached by singular zeal to the Holy See, especially on account of the Council which was formerly held here. Hence in my judgment it is worthy of the favor of your Holiness especially as what it desires is neither unjust, nor yet difficult to grant. I am asked to write this, although there is no need of it.

If your Holiness will test my obedience, let him enjoin on me what he will; and never let him number Erasmus among his own unless I shall seem prompt and eager. May the spirit of the Lord Jesus direct your mind and all your efforts to the saving of the world and the glory of God. Basle, December 22, 1522.[3]

We note the absence of all fulsome compliment to the new Pontiff, and we recognize in this one letter the ring of sincerity which has shown itself in very few of his epistles hitherto. It is a pleasure to be able to depict him in this hour of utter frankness, when his thoughts and aspirations were entirely and genuinely altruistic. It fell out that the Pope's reply to Erasmus' first letter was sent to Brabant instead of Basle, for the probable reason that Erasmus' departure to Basle was not yet known at Rome. Hence the Pope had received Erasmus' second letter shortly after replying to the first. We give them in the order of their receipt:

Beloved son. Health and the Apostolic benediction. Your letters, both the one you wrote with your own hand and the one you printed in the front of your *Arnobius* dedicating your labors to us, have been read by us again and again, in the first place, because they came from yourself whom for your high erudition we have always prized; and in the second place, because they exhibit your remarkable affection towards ourself and our office. . . . As to your writing that you fear lest you might have become a subject of suspicion to us on account of the hatreds and evil whisperings of the Lutheran faction, we desire you to be of good cheer in that regard. Although, to speak the truth, your name has occasionally been brought to our notice by one or another who was unfriendly to you, yet by nature and custom, as also on account of the pastoral office which we hold, we are not wont to lend our ears very readily to those things which are perversely brought before us concerning learned men and men endowed with virtue, whom the more learned we perceive them to be, the more open to the sting of envy we find them to be.

For the love we bear you, and out of our desire for your true glory and fame, we must not omit to exhort you to exercise against those heresies that pen which, by the kindness of God, has most happily fallen to your lot, since for many reasons you are to con-

[3] Eras. Ep. 1329.

sider such a duty especially reserved to you by God. You possess a powerful genius, varied erudition, and a facile pen, such as very few others, I might even say, none within our memory, have ever possessed. Moreover, you are held in great respect and favor in those principalities where this evil started, advantages which you certainly ought to use for His honor and the defense of His Church, from whose goodness alone they have been granted to you. Why we particularly desire you to do this is, that you may thus impose silence on those who have tried to cast suspicion on you in this matter of Luther; and that you may adorn your labors, which you have so long spent in enriching polite literature and in improving the sacred Scriptures, by taking upon yourself this most holy task, than which there is none more pleasing to God, none more acceptable to true Catholics, and none more worthy of your own genius, erudition, and eloquence.

Do not wait your whole life long for an occasion which may do grander service to God, be more honorable to the country of your birth, yea, or be of greater benefit to the Universal Church of Christ, than if at the present moment, following the zealous example of your own Jerome, of Augustine, and of the other holy fathers, you were to confound, pull down, and expose to derision by the strongest reasons and authorities of Holy Writ these stupid, uncouth, and malignant heresies, not invented by Martin Luther at all, but by those early heresiarchs whom the Catholic Church and the holy fathers, inspired doubtless by the Divine Spirit, have so often condemned, but which being again dug up from hell are now being adopted, and which, alas, are daily destroying the souls of so many of your brethren, and filling all things with the abominations of confusion. Many things you have hitherto zealously written, Erasmus, and with large success, which, although they have brought great benefit to learned men, are however in comparison with this work to which we exhort you, and which the common consensus of public opinion expects of you, less important; for such things are profitable only to the learned, while this is going to redound, with the grace of God, to the general peace and tranquillity of all Christians, which is in this age almost the sole end of evangelical learning. Since this is so, dear son Erasmus, you who from boyhood to the present have advanced almost through every grade, and with your utmost endeavor by means of study and writing better and better have advanced those of the arts which you have essayed, you, I repeat, ought no longer to refuse this undertaking which is so much in accord with your learning, profession, and age, especially since you still possess the same vigorous pen, but with a much more stable judgment, and, as we might expect, a far richer store of erudition than ever before. Nor can you reasonably decline this duty because, perhaps out of somewhat profound modesty, you declare yourself unequal to the task. For, besides the fact that all know better, and that the truth of that is evident, God, in whose service you will be working while on the matter, will be with you, and you will have a

most just cause to strive for, that of the Faith, which has always been victorious at the last over the attacks and snares of heretics, and will be so now without doubt even though God in His most just judgment permit the bark of His Church to be tossed about in this tempest on account of the exceeding great sins of men, and especially of ecclesiastics. Can we imagine that this same God of ours will now abandon His Spouse the Church, which He has acquired for Himself with His most precious blood, and with which He promised to remain even unto the consummation of the world? but rather that He will put to confusion those who have not feared to lift up against the knowledge of God and against Catholic truth their proud intellects, for whom "His judgment," says Paul, "tarries not, and their destruction sleeps not." "I have seen," says the Prophet, " the impious exalted above the cedars of Lebanon; I have passed close by and behold he was not; I have sought him out nor was there found the place where he was." Which for a surety, we doubt not, will quickly happen to Luther and his partisans unless they return to their senses. As they are carnal and contemners of authority, so they study to make others like unto themselves. Do you therefore hesitate to use your pen against the madness of those whom God already seems to have cast away from His presence, and to have handed over manifestly to their own false perceptions, so that they utter, teach, and put into effect, things which are so discordant? by which the Universal Church of Christ is thrown into disorder, and innumerable souls are involved with them in the danger of eternal damnation. Rise, rise in aid of God's cause, and employ the distinguished gifts of your mind in His behalf, as you have done hitherto. Think of this, that it is in your power, with the help of God, to restore to the path of rectitude a large part of those who have been corrupted by Luther, and to confirm in the Faith those who have not yet fallen away, while those who are vacillating and near to falling may be completely preserved therefrom.

How pleasing to God and grateful to true Catholics that will be, you yourself can easily judge. You also ought to remember that saying of St. James the Apostle, who asserts that "He who converts his brother wandering from the truth, and recalls the sinner from the error of his ways, shall save him from death, and shall cover a multitude of sins." We ourselves can never tell you how acceptable a work you will perform, if by your efforts those who are infected by this worst of heresies shall rather return to their senses of their own accord than wait to be chastised by the condemnatory rod of the sacred canons and the imperial laws. How foreign to our nature that would be, you, we think, best know, ever since that time at Louvain when we spent our days in the sweet relaxation of sacred literature together as private individuals.

Now, if you will enhance still further the value of this request, we ask of you out of our great zeal for the salvation of the flock entrusted to us, and out of our longing for Christian tranquillity, to

come to us as soon as possible after the winter has gone and the Roman air, which at times is infected with the plague, has become purified; but come in good health, and come happy. It will rejoice you not a little in this task, which you not only owe us but are capable of performing, that there is here such an abundance of books, besides a frequent converse with many pious and learned men on this subject. For ourselves, we will see to it that in a short time, with the help of God, you will have no reason to regret either the journey or this holy task. Furthermore, our beloved son Doctor John Faber, a zealous man and wonderfully learned, most devoted to yourself, and a great herald of your virtues everywhere, will explain the matter to you in person or by letter and more at length, to whom you will show the same confidence that you repose in ourselves. Given at Rome, at St. Peter's, under the seal of the Fisherman, December 1, in the year of our Lord 1522, and in the first year of our pontificate.[4]

It enhances our esteem for the keen perspicacity of Pope Adrian VI that he so well sensed the means of penetrating to Erasmus' nobler nature. History has not yet done complete justice to this Pontiff for two main causes: first, that he lived in a time of stress and passion when angry men would not listen to reason; and secondly, because his short pontificate of eighteen months, only part of which period was spent in Rome due to the prior necessity of finishing up the business of his regency in Spain, did not permit him to bring his plans for the pacification of the Church to their fruition. We feel that this letter was written by no pontifical scribe, but was penned by Adrian himself speaking to Erasmus as man to man. He seems to have fathomed the depths of Erasmus' nature, his pride of intellect, his vanity, his irritability, his impatience of reproof, and his rejection of every sort of criticism, and with a fatherly kindness to have decided to shut his eyes to his many faults in consideration of his potentialities as a defender of the sorely tried Church. In a way, moreover, he was proud of him as a fellow-countryman, and had taken the full measure of his environment, including therein both his friends and his foes. He resolved that he would not permit him to be baited any longer by men like Stunica, and that he would turn his lukewarmness into ardor for the Church's support. He appealed to him as one of the world's greatest scholars, as undoubtedly the most masterly writer of the day, as a Hollander, and lastly as a friend. He succeeded in carrying Erasmus off his feet, and the extent of the affection and enthusiasm that he had aroused in him is plainly evident in Erasmus' replies. The reader, having been reminded that these letters had crossed each other in transit, will be prepared to excuse any lack of sequence which may appear in them. We now give Adrian's second letter to Erasmus, anent the latter's offer to the Pope of a plan for pacifying the Church.

Health and the Apostolic benediction. Your letter from Basle, dated December 22, was delivered to us a few days ago with another

[4] *Ibid.*, 1324.

copy, elegantly and sumptuously bound, of your recently revised and edited *Arnobius,* dedicated to ourselves, and which was sent because you were not sure that the first one had reached us. For them both we rejoice in the Lord sincerely and more than you might readily imagine. For as far as we can judge from the lengthy epistle which prefaces the work, and from the little of it which we have till now been able to read on account of our divers occupations, we readily conjecture it to be in itself, in addition to your own editing and revision, one that ought greatly to please all scholars. Your letter itself shows so well the sincerity of your mind, your religious feelings, your zeal for God, your piety, your devotion and reverence towards ourselves and this See of St. Peter that, if ever a sinister suspicion of your integrity crept into our mind, implanted there by unfriendly reports such as are never lacking about eminent men, this letter of yours has completely removed all that; and hence you may rest assured that a great increment has been added to the benevolence with which we have ever regarded you, both on account of our one common fatherland, our mutual love of study, and our common manner of life, as well as because of the manifold gifts with which the Giver of all good has endowed you.

It was especially gratifying to us that in your letter you promised us a plan by which the turbulence and confusion of these times might, as you say, be so quenched that they would not easily revive. We exhort you in the Lord, and as earnestly as we can, and in the abundance of our affection we request of you that, as far as the Lord has favored you, you will occupy yourself in disclosing to us the manner and method whereby this dire evil, while still curable, may be removed from the midst of the people of our own race. For there is nothing under the sun which we more ardently desire, not because our authority and power, as far as such pertains to us as an individual, may seem to be endangered somewhat by this raging tempest—for we never craved such in any way, but on the contrary, insistently shrank from it when it was offered to us, and would certainly, as we call God to witness, have refused it, had we not dreaded to offend God and wound our own conscience—but because we perceived so many thousands of souls, redeemed by the blood of Christ and entrusted to our pastoral care, and they too our own people according to the flesh, who are being drawn straight to perdition under the delusion of evangelical liberty, but really to the service of the devil.

Therefore, the more quickly and secretly you make known to us your plan, the greater service you will perform for God, and the more acceptable a gratification to ourselves. There is need of celerity on account of the common danger, and of secrecy by reason of risk to yourself whose welfare we desire as much as our own. Although we suppose that long ago our letter in answer to the one with which you accompanied the other copy of your *Arnobius* must have reached you, and at the end of which we invited you to

come to us when the winter was over and the air of Rome was again purged of the present plague, and had conceived great hopes from your first epistle that you would gratify us in this; yet we must not cease to make this same request of you even more insistently now, unless perhaps it is quite evident to yourself that you will be of more service to God where you are than here with us, and at the same time more profitable to the Church. In such an event it would be against our design and intention to call you from the richer harvest, since we seek the honor of God and the building up of His Church irrespective of our own private feelings. Otherwise, be assured that you could do nothing more gratifying than to come to us, and to come quickly (provided that this could be done without inconvenience to yourself); and it would be our care to see to it that you would have no reason to regret either your journey or your efforts, as we promised in our former letter and now here repeat. There is no reason why you should defer your coming on account of either of the said causes, since now the winter is beginning to disappear, and the contagion of the plague is so limited that in such a large city as this there is scarcely a trace of it to be seen.

The affair of the city of Basle, we have very much at heart, because of its nobility, and of its devotion to the Holy See, and on account of your intercession; and the matter shall be expedited shortly, just as soon as the nuncio returns to that city.

Given at St. Peter's in Rome, under the Fisherman's seal, this 23rd of January, 1523, and in the first year of our pontificate.[5]

These two letters place both Pope Adrian and Erasmus in a very good light, historically speaking, showing that both realized the present crisis was one that could be dealt with properly only on a basis of justice to all concerned; that it was no longer a question of disciplining a recalcitrant monk, but rather of meeting fairly and squarely the issues he had raised. Such seemed to be the essence of the plan which Erasmus proposed to Adrian, and which the latter was to put into effect by appointing a sort of commission consisting of the greatest minds of Europe to sit and consider dispassionately the grounds of Luther's differences. It was to be an ideal board of arbitration devoid of passion and politics, but such a board, as we can now see, was impossible of attainment, for the simple reason that in the Europe of that tempestuous moment there were no impartial arbitrators. The world had become divided into two great camps, and there were no disinterested spectators to watch the coming battle. At the juncture of which we are speaking, all the patience, all the desire for concord, and all the effort to be calm but just, were on the side of the Pope and Erasmus; all the violence, all the impatience, and all the unbridled fury of revolt, on the side of Luther. The greatest fault that Luther had in the opinion of Erasmus was his terrible violence. We fail to find any reference of Pope Adrian to Luther which was even disrespectful, unless his allusion to the "Lutheran faction" can be so construed; while on Luther's

[5] *Ibid.*, 1338.

side his mildest epithet for the Pope was to call him Antichrist. But we need not wonder too much at that when we observe the abuse which Luther's own friends had to endure from him. The least check sent him into a fury. Writing to Spalatin from the Wartburg at a time when he was plainly maniacal, he defied anyone to keep him from assailing in a pamphlet the Archbishop of Mainz, asserting that "I would sooner destroy yourself, the Elector, and every created being." [6]

The letter that Erasmus sent to Adrian explaining his plan of settling the Lutheran difficulty is rather unsatisfactory in that the missive is unfinished, stopping just at the point where he is unfolding the plan, and making us feel doubtful as to whether it was ever sent. But such as it is we will give it in synopsis. He tells the Pope that he is writing hurriedly in order to make use of an unexpected courier, that he would prefer to speak with him personally rather than to write but that his ancient enemy the gravel kept him from going to Rome, that he could not abide the German stoves, the German inns, nor the sour wines. Then he begins to give his reasons why it should not be expected of him to write against Luther. He says:

> No one shall read this epistle but ourselves; if there be anything of use in it, employ it; if not, consider that it has never been written.
>
> Would that I possessed the ability which you attribute to me, that I might put an end to this dissension; for I would not hesitate to heal these public evils even at the cost of my own life. In the first place, there are many who wield a more facile pen than myself, and this affair is not to be settled by writing. My learning is far beneath mediocrity, and what I may have is derived from the ancient writers and is fitter for the pulpit than for the arena. As for my power to influence, of what avail would be the authority of such an humble individual as myself? Could Erasmus influence those whom so many universities, so many monarchs, and even the Sovereign Pontiff himself have failed to move? If I ever enjoyed their personal regard, it has either grown so cold now that it no longer exists, or it has entirely perished, or, finally, it has been changed to hatred. I, who was formerly described in a myriad of letters as "the thrice-greatest hero," "the king of letters," "the star of Germany," "the sun of learning," "the mainstay of literature," "the champion of a more genuine theology," am now passed over in silence, or depicted in far different colors.
>
> I care nothing for such empty titles, which were only a burden to me; but see the epithets they launch at my head, the vicious pamphlets with which they attack me, and the threats they hold out against me! There were not lacking some who threatened me with death if I stirred.[7]

[6] DeWette, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 346. (We cannot quite accept Bayne's effort to soften the force of *perdam* as he does in his *Martin Luther, His Life and Work*, Vol. II, p. 193.)

[7] Eras. Ep. 1352, ll. 23-41.

Then he goes on in his usual way to say that he is blamed by the one side for writing against Luther, and by the other side because he will not consent to write against him. Then he tells the Pope how many of his friends he would lose by writing against Luther, and that he would almost die rather than part with them. Then he plucks up resolution, and says that he will give them up rather than appear seditious. He reminds the Pontiff of the tremendous impetus he could give the cause of Luther were he to decide to cast in his lot with him, but adds with a rhetorical flourish that he will not touch upon that point. He goes on to relate what he has already done against Luther, that he has not allowed the latter's friends even to use his name, that he has publicly and privately exhorted everyone not to follow Luther, and yet what was his reward? Only to be lacerated by both sides. And so he goes on for many paragraphs, until we begin anxiously to look for the promised plan. The Pope has invited him to Rome, but can a crab fly?

> "Give me wings," says the crab. So I say, "Give me back my youth, my good health." Would that such an excuse as this had less foundation! It would be tedious to enumerate the reasons which persuaded me to stay until now at Basle; but at the same time I dare swear that, if I perceived anything more useful to the Church of Christ [than this course of mine], I would do it at the risk of my life. . . .
>
> Permit, I entreat you again and again, one of your flock to speak to his shepherd somewhat freely. Why should I go to Rome, even though my health allowed it? I should be away from all association with the Lutherans? But I am especially that already, for I have nothing at all to do with them, and consequently there is no danger to be feared from that quarter as far as my soul is concerned. Now, as far as recalling them from their errors is involved, I can do that better near at hand than far away, for of what use is the doctor to his sick ones if he betakes himself far off? [8]

At this point he began to see that his letter was going to be of scant comfort to Pope Adrian, filled up as it was by his intense and overpowering ego. So he tries again to rise to the importance of the occasion:

> You will say, "So far I hear nothing but complaints; I am waiting to hear your plan." Now what I had said is a part of my plan; however, I will come to that now. I observe it to be favored by many that this evil should be remedied by severity, but I fear that the event may hereafter prove this to have been an unwise counsel. I see a greater chance than I could wish that the matter may end in an atrocious slaughter. I am not now discussing what these people deserve, but what will further the interests of public tranquillity. The malady has spread too deeply to be cured either by knife or cautery. I admit that formerly among the English the faction of Wickliffe was thus stifled by the power of the kings, but that sect was really stifled rather than eradicated. And yet I know

[8] *Idem.*, ll. 121-37.

not whether what was feasible in that kingdom, which was under the sway of one king, would be possible in so vast an empire as ours, cut up as it is into so many kingdoms. It is evident that there will be no need of my advice should there be a decision to overcome the evil by imprisonment, scourgings, confiscation, exiles, rigorous penalties, and death. However, I perceive that a different line of treatment is most pleasing to your gentle nature, that you would rather cure than punish. This would not be very difficult if all were of the same mind as yourself, and, laying aside their private inclinations, would, as you write, sincerely seek the glory of Christ and the salvation of Christians. But if each one is intent on his own private profit, if theologians insist that their authority bolstered up on every side shall be supported, if the monks allow nothing to be taken away from their privileges, if the kings cling to their rights with tenacity, it will be most difficult to act for the benefit of everybody.

Our first duty will be to find out the sources whence this evil revives so often, and before all to apply the remedy to those. Then it will be very useful if pardon is again extended to those who have erred by the persuasion or by the urging of others; or rather a sort of amnesty for all their former misdeeds which seem to have occurred by some fatality. If God deals thus with us day after day, forgetting our offenses as often as the sinner is sincerely sorry, why should not the Vicar of God do the same? And yet, meanwhile, many innovations are repressed by rulers and magistrates which are little aids to piety, but great helps to sedition. I could wish, if it were possible, that the privilege of publishing pamphlets were limited to some extent. Let there also be given to the world the hope of having certain things remedied of which it justly complains. At the sweet name of liberty all will breathe again. We must aim at this in every possible way as far as it can be done without damage to religion; and we must aim at relieving the consciences of men as far as that is consonant with the dignity of princes and bishops. But this dignity must be estimated by those things in which their dignity truly consists, just as the liberty of the people is to be estimated.

Your Holiness will say, "What are those sources, or what are the things which should be remedied?" For the consideration of these matters I think there ought to be invited from every country men whose characters are beyond suspicion, grave, gentle, kindly, and of quiet disposition, whose judgment——[9]

Here the letter breaks off abruptly, and we are left to conjecture how these grave, kind, gentle scholars of quiet disposition were going to enforce their judgment after they had arrived at it. Erasmus tells us, in another epistle, about sending this fragmentary document to the Pope, but that it did not meet favor in his eyes.[10] And no wonder. The Pope had asked him for bread and he had given him a stone. He had sought

[9] *Idem.*, l. 147 *ad fin.*

[10] "Misi partem, sed displicuit."

to enlist that wonderful pen in behalf of the Church, and Erasmus had taken refuge behind the miserable subterfuge, which he himself was far from believing, that others wielded a readier pen, that he was a very obscure and humble individual, and that his learning was beneath mediocrity. The rest of the letter was filled with his usual egotism, for that was at the bottom of his eternal complaining, and this is nowhere more evident than in his ingenious request to have the Pontiff call off the pamphleteers who were constantly on the great but irritable writer's trail. Then, after an appeal to Adrian not to be cruel, a thing which was as far from that Pontiff's intention as it was from Erasmus', he begins to suggest a commission of grave men, which was simply another way of calling for a general council of the Church. It would be hard to say whether the sincere and earnest Adrian was more disappointed at the inanity of the plan proposed or disgusted at the pusillanimity of Erasmus: for it is very evident from all this that, although Erasmus had definitely ceased from sympathizing with Luther, he had resolved not to incur the hostility of the Lutheran party by writing against him.

CHAPTER XIV

CONTINUED ATTEMPTS TO JUSTIFY POSITION: QUARREL WITH HUTTEN

But retribution was awaiting him in the person of Ulrich von Hutten, who inflicted a terrible punishment on his peace of mind in return for his puerile policy of blowing now hot and now cold. As preliminary to this we shall give part of a long letter written by Erasmus to Marcus Laurinus, Dean of the College of St. Donatianus at Bruges, whose acquaintance he had made during an investigation of the college library, where he had been fortunate enough to find many manuscripts of the Gospels. After going through the constant and ever-repeated list of his grievances against his so-called calumniators at Louvain, and giving for his leaving that University a reason which the event proved to be untrue, he goes on to tell Laurinus of the strenuous efforts which the Lutherans are making to win him to their side. Since we have already rehearsed this point, we may pass over to his effort to show Laurinus that he is a staunch anti-Lutheran. He writes:

> Again, there are among those who favor Luther some who gnash their teeth and are furious because out of timidity of mind, as they put it, I am deserting the evangelical cause, and not only deserting it, but also attempting to strengthen that of the Popes, or, as they say, the papist cause. Now I have often enough already answered others on this point, but I will very willingly discuss the subject with any Lutheran whatsoever, provided he have a regard for justice; and I opine that I shall be able to prove my case from the points which he shall grant me. For firstly I shall ask him what he thinks of Luther. Undoubtedly he will declare him to be a holy and evangelical man, and a restorer of Christian piety. Then I shall ask him whether those who are devoted to him resemble him in this. Without doubt he will assert that to be so. Then I shall ask him whether it be in accord with the Gospel to drag anyone into their sect by force and artifice, especially when they know that the profession of such a belief as theirs is no less dangerous than was the profession of a Christian in the early days. It was the practice of the Jews to scour land and sea in order to entrap one proselyte into the net of the law. The Apostles attracted none by human artifices, and concealed the identity of those who had professed the name of Christ until the moment of acknowledging their faith was at hand.
>
> I could say the same thing if the profession of the Lutheran faction were only a profession of evangelical belief, and if anyone could make that profession secretly amongst them at any time. Now

I leave to others to decide as to what kind of a profession of faith theirs is. Whatever it is, it originated without my knowledge and progressed in spite of my warnings, even to the extent that a great part of the world began to applaud the spectacle. Then came the *Captivity of Babylon,* the *Abrogation of the Mass,* the defense of the entire doctrine of Huss; besides other things which their being written in the Saxon tongue prevented me from reading. And yet, although so far I have pronounced no verdict on the dogmas of Luther, for many reasons, but principally because I perceived the matter to lie beyond the scope of my comprehension, yet I have given evidence in many of my letters that I am entirely averse to any association with the followers of Luther, and that I desire a little more Christian moderation in those of his writings which I have happened to read, and wish for less bitterness. Here I shall again call on my Lutheran friend to say whether or not he deems that an excellent and praiseworthy deed which he performs at great risk of his own life and serious risk to the lives of others. He will reply, I suppose, that it is truly apostolic, and worthy of eternal remembrance. Well, now, with your permission, who would not deem me the most arrogant of living mortals were I to arrogate so much praise to myself, when I did not deserve the least little bit? Nay, who would not think me more insane than ever Orestes was, if I were to angle for a most empty glory purchased at the risk of my life? Long since, many monarchs and church dignitaries have felt persuaded that I was the source, the originator, the defender, and the supporter of the entire teaching of Luther, and that, moreover, the books which are in circulation under his name are really mine. Ought I in silence to suffer such glory to be given to me? St. John the Baptist cries out "I am not the Christ!" and does it become me to remain silent? But they will say, "You have given too much proof of this in many epistles." Nay, so far, in so many epistles, I have yet been hardly able to persuade some people, so deeply infixed was this impudent lie in the minds of the many.

With respect to moderation and abuse, again shall I question my Lutheran friend whether or not he deems it expedient to spread the teaching of Luther as widely as possible throughout the world, and to make it commendable to both the highest and the lowest. Of a surety he will answer that it is especially expedient. Why then are some of them angry with Erasmus for desiring to see removed from his books two things which particularly destroy confidence and alienate the minds of all good men?—I allude to his arrogance and his uncontrolled abuse. And yet these things are so remarkably manifest that those who defend him most warmly have no excuse which they may offer save that my sins have so deserved, so that I am scourged as with scorpions by this harsh scolder. The first thing that made me suspicious about the spirit of Luther was the ferocity of his pen and his ever-ready abuse; and I have no doubt . . . that others have had the same experience. . . .[1]

[1] Eras. Ep. 1342, ll. 729-90.

He goes on to tell how terribly Luther excoriated the book which Henry VIII wrote against him in defense of the Seven Sacraments, and seeks to show how unwise it was for Luther to do so, considering the power of kings. Then he resumes the thread of his argument as follows:

> I should like here again to summon my Lutheran friend, whom I have chosen as a rather just judge. The causes of indignation are of this sort. I appeared in some letters of mine, I know not where, to offer a hope that, if I were allowed, and had the leisure, I should write in behalf of the peace of the Christian world and of the dignity of the Apostolic See. Now how does such a promise adversely affect Luther? But they pretend that I have written against him something, I know not what, which is certainly not true so far, although all the rest of the world is preparing to write against him. Why should they be angry with me alone if I bestir myself in the same direction, having been ordered to do so by those whom it were scarcely safe to refuse? But I think my critic will concede me this: that Luther is not so perversely unjust as to be angry if one dissents from him in anything, since he permits himself to differ, not only from all the Doctors of the Church, but also from the decrees of the Councils; or consider himself injured, if someone, abstaining from abuse, search out the truth by the testimony of the Scriptures (to which he attributes prime importance) and by solid reasoning. For he summons all, and the Roman Pontiff summons all no less insistently than Luther, to argue out the case by means of solid reasonings and by the testimony of the Scriptures. Hence it was not just for them to threaten me, before they had seen with what reasoning and with what moderation I would write.[2]

After this he goes on to tell how many books written by Luther and his friends were attributed to him, notably the *Captivity of Babylon,* for which he had to bear the blame amongst his own friends.

> Let us hear then the rest of my offenses. "He still esteems highly and acknowledges the Roman Church," they say. "He still demands that the Roman Pontiff be honored, and he writes that no good man has ever withdrawn himself from that jurisdiction." These and many other things of the same sort appear in their letters. Of jurisdiction I have never written. At times I have written that all pious men respect the dignity of the Pope. For who would not respect the dignity of him who represents for us by his evangelical virtues Christ Himself? And I add the following whenever I defer to the dignity of the Pope: nobody knows in what the true dignity of the Pope consists; nor is this stated in one place in my lucubrations. But I have learned from the Gospels and the Apostolic Epistles that honor is to be given to even heathen kings, unless they command us to do what is plainly impious. By that rule I

[2] *Idem,* ll. 816-34.

deem no bishop's dignity should be contemned. And is it not impious to despise a good bishop? But they paint for themselves those whom they wish to contemn. "And who is the Roman Pontiff?" they exclaim. "Is he not a burner of the Gospel, an enemy of God, a seducer of all Christian people?" If they are speaking of such a Pontiff as that, he would never be approved by me. And yet, even if there were such, it is not for me to hurl them from their throne, for Christ still lives, and holds in His hand the whip to scourge such from His temple.

"But there is no hope," they say, "that a better one than Leo will follow." Now I am not the judge of Leo; he has his own Judge by whom he stands or falls. If so many good ones precede him, why may there not be the hope that Popes similar to those early ones may follow? But of that I allege nothing, lest I may seem to flatter. When adjured to do so by the impious high-priest, Christ himself made answer; nor was he wholly silent when ordered to speak by Pilate. How did Paul plead his cause before Festus, Felix, and Agrippa? did he not call them tyrants, servants of the Devil, slaves of sin, and enemies of God, who were presently to be sentenced to eternal fire? Now, see what those people would have replied to anyone who would excuse me for my forbearance. "That is the way Erasmus should speak:" my critic says, " 'Pope, thou art Antichrist; bishops, you are seducers; your See of Rome is abominable to God';" and many other even more detestable things of the same tenor. They do not approve of the forbearance of Erasmus, unless they preface their praise with such things as those, so evangelically, forsooth. This first I shall enquire from my critic, whether he thinks such demands which he makes of me are just? and then whether he considers them useful in this Lutheran affair? If I were to write such things as those against good Popes, would I not appear somewhat unjust? If I were to rage in that manner against bad Popes, what else should I do than stir up hornets' nests to sting myself and many others? [8]

As the reader has perceived by this time that the letter is purely subjective, that it is not a question of the right or wrong of Luther's teaching, but an appeal to Luther's friends not to be too hard on him if he shall feel compelled to stay with the papal party, we need not follow it any further. There is one point in it, however, which has some interest for us here, in that he here first touches on the subject of Freewill, which he was afterwards to amplify and issue as his first real contribution against Luther.

There remains still to be discussed my very greatest offense. In my *Paraphrase,* in which I explain the ninth chapter of the Apostle St. Paul to the Romans, I attribute a small degree of efficacy to Freewill, following therein Origen and Jerome. Now, since my *Paraphrase* is a sort of commentary, and since I profess in many passages that I am following the approved and early interpreters,

[8] *Idem,* ll. 886-925.

what crime do I commit if I follow here and there Origen and Jerome, writers in my estimation who are not to be contemned in the matter of the Scriptures? Moreover, my book appeared before Luther had promulgated his dogma, or rather that of Wickliffe, that whatever we do either of good or evil is of absolute necessity. For my *Paraphrase* was printed at Louvain in 1517, and existed some months in manuscript at Antwerp previous to being printed, and a certain person was called quite Erasmian because he believed as I do about Freewill, and differed from Luther. But they pardoned him for it on the ground that he was a young man with a bright future, who would in a short time feel differently about the matter.

Here again I call on my fair-minded critic, and ask him why I should be brought to book as the author of this opinion, when I had written it before Luther had promulgated his dogma, all the theologians, both ancient and modern, Origen, Jerome, Chrysostom, Hilary, Arnobius, Scotus, and Thomas, being in agreement with me on the point; and why anyone who dissents from Luther should be called Erasmian rather than Hilarian or Jeronymite, especially since I did not undertake to treat the matter at any length in my *Paraphrase,* but casually passed over it, just as did St. Paul, who did not deign to there respond to an insincere questioner. And yet observe, dear reader, how much less weight I there attribute to Freewill than do either the ancient writers or the later universities. I suspect that these are the words in the ninth chapter by which they are offended. When I propounded that monstrous question which is put to God, and by which some endeavor to fasten on him an injustice, "No," I say, "there is something resides in our own will and our own effort, but it is so little that, compared with the gratuitous beneficence of God, it seems to be nothing at all. No one is damned except by his own fault; no one is saved unless by the grace of God: therefore He deems those worthy whom he wishes, but in such a way that it is a reason for you to be grateful, not to complain." Those words appear in my *Paraphrase.*[10]

I saw herein the peril of Scylla on the one hand drawing us to a trust in works, which I confess to be the greatest pest of religion; on the other hand I beheld a Charybdis, an evil still more formidable by which many are now held, saying, "We will follow our inclinations; for whether we torment ourselves or indulge our will, yet what God has once decreed for us will happen." Thus I so qualified my pronouncement on the matter as to allow some little weight to Freewill, lest I should open a window to so capital a stupidity that, throwing away all effort towards a better life, everybody should do as he pleased. And yet I wrote this quite unaware that there was anyone who wished to remove entirely all power of Freewill, a dogma such that, even if it struck me as being true, yet should I hesitate to spread it in naked words among the populace.

[10] See *Paraphrasis Erasmi in Epistolam Pauli ad Romanos* (in *Libri Paraphraseōn,* Tom. II, Cap. IX, p. 44, Basle. 1524).

> Everyone knows that before the days of Christ philosophers disputed about fate; and from them have come down to us insoluble questions about foreknowledge, predestination by God, Freewill of man, and of what is to happen to us hereafter; in all of which questions I deem it the very best policy not to bother oneself too anxiously, since they form for us an impenetrable abyss.[11]

Here we have something tangible, indeed; and we are glad to see that it is important, for herein we observe the germ—so small as yet that he himself scarcely recognized it—of what afterwards he amplified and developed into his famous book against Luther on Freewill. But this will meet us later. This letter is also valuable as showing us that he had definitely decided to make known to the whole world that he was not in sympathy with Luther; and, whereas hitherto he had given as his sole reason for such action the uncurbable violence of Luther, he was now plucking up courage to declare that he differed with him on doctrinal points. Writing to Duke George of Saxony a year previously, he had said, "Would that in his writings there were not so many good things, or that he had not contaminated his good things with what is intolerable!" [12] We shall see less and less of this attitude in the future. He had not yet decided to face Luther openly, and what he now said about him was in letters to friends. Thus he says, "Cajetan, Sylvester, and Eck have sufficiently well maintained the primacy of the Pope, so that there is no need of my help." [13] And again, writing to the Bishop of Olmutz, he declares, "Many persons, especially princes, urge me to write against Luther, but if I might be permitted I should prefer to fight against the world for the glory of Christ, since there will be no lack of antagonists to combat Luther." [14] And always we are left in doubt whether he feared more Luther's violence or Luther's ability. As we have already said, he loved not controversy, for which by nature he was not constitutionally fitted, but preferred to sit in his study and speak as it were *ex cathedra,* since he fiercely resented being brought to task for any of his statements. But this was not to be, for his vacillating course thus far had alienated from him his best friends, and he began to realize with real regret the pass to which he had come. He was held in general suspicion as being unsound in his doctrine, not alone by the Catholics, but also by the followers of Luther; so that it was in genuine agony of spirit that he exclaimed:

> I never held terms with any of the Lutherans, but always invited them back to more moderate sentiments, fearing that the affair would end in sedition. And yet there are some, even in the Emperor's very court, who have most impertinently treated me as a Lutheran. Thus to both parties am I a heretic.[15]

Hutten and other witty but turbulent spirits like himself had devoted their talents to the purpose of ridiculing the Pope, his envoys, his nun-

[11] Eras. Ep. 1342, ll. 926-75.
[12] *Ibid.,* 1313.
[13] *Ibid.,* 1275.
[14] *Ibid.,* 1267.
[15] *Idem.*

cios; but every shaft of ridicule, every caustic witticism, every scurrilous diatribe, was attributed to Erasmus, and used to wound him terribly if we may judge by his epistolary reactions. To such an extent was this sort of misrepresentation carried that even the ruffianly reply that Luther made to King Henry VIII's work on the Seven Sacraments was currently reported in England as emanating from Erasmus under cover of Luther's name. This was manifestly unfair and elicits our sympathy for Erasmus. But he had still one or two good friends in England who set themselves to find out the facts in this last case and so put Erasmus in a better light. One of these faithful friends was Cuthbert Tunstall, formerly Bishop of London, now Bishop of Durham, who had been the king's personal envoy to the court of the Emperor. There was a bond of sympathy, we might really say of affection, subsisting between the two, who seem to have been drawn to each other with more than the usual attraction. This was partly due, no doubt, to the similarity of their tastes, but it is also probable that another circumstance had its influence, namely, the fact that they were both of illegitimate birth, and had in consequence a fellow-feeling for each other. A similar feeling had attracted him to Celio Calcagnini and the young Archbishop of St. Andrew's, as we have mentioned heretofore; but, without desiring to press this point, we feel it is enough to say that Tunstall had helped him for several years with his money and influence, and no one felt it more keenly than Tunstall when Erasmus' popularity in England began to wane. So, when the astounding rumor reached him that Luther's reply to the king's book was really penned by Erasmus, he lost no time in eliciting the truth in the matter and in presenting it to the king himself and all the English court. He expresses his intense satisfaction in finding Erasmus free from all complicity in the unmannerly book: we subjoin his letter here:

> I cannot express to you how greatly I am rejoiced to learn from your letters, especially from those which you wrote to the king and the legate, that you are able to clear yourself from those suspicions which some people have told you were rife here, that a portion of that book which Luther had published against the king had emanated from you, not that such a suspicion was so deeply imbedded in the minds of men that it needed your letters to eradicate it, since the entire book so abounds in insults, and in every page so exhales the Lutheran poison, that when you read it you know the very printing office from which it issued. But I am particularly pleased to gather that there is no connection between you and the Lutherans, and that you have been asked by the Supreme Pontiff to undertake the task of contending with Luther, and that, being prevailed upon, you are already in the arena. Now what all your friends greatly wish and eagerly desire is that you will at length make a stand against that Proteus, nay, rather, that Atheist.
>
> You say that you are reviled by Luther and the Lutherans; but not any worse than God himself is vilified, whom Luther makes out to be the author of all malice by taking away Freewill from men,

claiming that all things are controlled by the laws of necessity so that no one has a free choice of doing well. Hence the revilings inflicted on you for the cause of Christ beget you more praise than all the encomiums of the world beside, so that there is no reason why you should fear on that account. Now it seems to me that you first owe the doing of this work to your country, which is in danger of becoming infected by this pestilent contagion, and which will spread itself far more widely unless someone comes forward to grapple with it.

Never has there been anyone of those who have been learned in the Scriptures who saw in his own day a heresy springing up without attacking it. For what reason is your own Jerome so celebrated other than that he vigorously confuted the heresies of his time? It was not the restoration of the sacred books of Moses and the Prophets of Hebraic verity that rendered him so illustrious, nor his numerous commentaries achieved with immense effort, but rather that he stood forth as a champion against Helvidius, Jovinianus, the Luciferani, Vigilantius, and the Pelagians. Where shines more clearly the erudition of Origen than against Celsus, or that of Basil than against Eunomius? See what praise Cyprian received when he so earnestly inveighed against Demetrianus, Novatianus, and Novatus, and what renown accrued to Hilary when he assailed Constantius. . . .

It ought especially to move you that, with so many lucubrations written by you for the benefit of the Church, the Lutherans prepare to carry you off, and falsely number you as one of themselves. Add that your rivals, whoever they are, who are now gnawing at your reputation, will allot you to that faction since they are unable to hurt you more in any other way. What an additional stimulus it is that the Supreme Pontiff Adrian, your fellow-countryman, in his solicitude for the Lord's flock, so earnestly invited you to take up the task! for which, in his judgment and that of all, you seem particularly fitted; while indeed, even if you had not been invited to do so, you ought to volunteer to undertake it, when you observe these heresies to be springing up, which, when full grown, will destroy the entire Church. Nor is it a case of one or two pernicious novelties being brought forward, but the huge army of Wickliffian heresies, with new weapons of offense added, namely, abuse, insults, epithets, tongues tinctured with venom, so that one may plainly see the poison of asps dripping from their lips. With such weapons as these they prepare to assail the Church, since they have no other way. Wherefore, the things which have been instituted and always observed in the Church since the birth of Christ, the traditions of the holy fathers, the rites of the Church, and all sacred things, are displeasing to these people, while they have not yet agreed as to what they desire to establish in place of them. For they contend that all Christian men, and perhaps women, are equally priests according to a certain Stoic folly of wisdom, and that all men are equally kings, for to that degree extends that Christian liberty of

theirs which, they assert, is not accountable to any human laws. Is this anything else but anarchy which they are preparing? although as yet the German rulers do not perceive it. The same thing was once tried in this country by the Wickliffites, a battle being fought, and our annals testify that it was with difficulty that the army of conspirators was routed and put to flight by the royal power. Luther has dared to publish a book *On Abrogating the Mass,* which he has never understood. What further remains for him to do, unless he has determined to write about the abolishing of Christ? And, indeed, the madness of the man would seem to tend in that direction, since we hear that the Blessed Virgin has already been hooted by his followers. Is such impiety to be further endured?

I beg and beseech you, and the Church prays and entreats you, Erasmus, through the exhausting labors of Christ suffered in His mortal body, through His blood which, as a ransom for the world, dying He shed for us, and through that glory which after this brief span of life you hope for in Heaven, that at length you will contend with this hydra. Only dare, and the world will promise you the victory. What an amount of guilt may be rightly laid at your door, if you do not fly as quickly as possible to bear succor to your own country which is in danger, to your Church which is tottering; and what immortal glory if by your means the religion of your native land is preserved, and by your writings the Church is sustained! Finally, those very labors which you have endured in embellishing the Sacred Scriptures ought to arouse you greatly, when you behold the text corrected by you with such toil now being polluted by these foul heresies, which eagerly desire to impress by their elegant phraseology, whence it comes to pass that they render elegance of diction in the Sacred Scriptures hateful to many. In what thing, pray, can you better employ that mind of yours, now through age visibly diminishing in vigor, than in driving back to its cavern with the sword of the spirit this Cerberus who is now insulting every rank in the Church with his dire howling? That you will do this everyone expects, especially as in your recently published work you have awakened the hopes of all in this matter. Farewell. London, June 5, 1523.[16]

The letter just quoted is of prime importance as showing the attitude of the English court and presumably of the English people towards Luther and the new doctrines. They seem not to have shown the slightest tendency or desire to fall away from the beliefs of their ancestors; and thus it seems that all the writers who have assumed such a condition of affairs to have existed just previous to the Reformation have based such an assumption on no contemporary authority. That some of the clergy required vigorous correction, and that religion was suffering in consequence, no one now denies, especially as we have Colet's testimony as previously quoted. But up to this present year of 1523 England was Catholic to the core, and Luther's doctrines had made no

[16] *Ibid.,* 1367.

progress there as yet. Tunstall's appeal to Erasmus to arise and meet Luther shows the attitude not only of himself, but of all the hierarchy in every country, and bears witness to the estimation in which his literary ability was held at that critical moment. He made Tunstall a courteous reply; but a close analysis of his letter shows as yet no decisive resolution to comply in the way that the Pope and the bishops desired, that is, that he should match his pen against Luther's. He rather clung as yet to the half-formulated plan he had presented to Pope Adrian, that a commission of scholars should take up Luther's teachings and formally pronounce on them, either to the Pope, or to a Council. We will give in part his reply, which somehow rather smacks of platitudes:

> . . . If people vehemently love a man, there is nothing in him that they do not praise; but, if they as vehemently hate him, there is nothing in him that they do not condemn. I hear of some things in Luther's writings that are blamed, which, if they were calmly discussed amongst the learned and upright, would add something to spiritual and evangelical vigor, from which indeed the world has too much degenerated. And this is especially due to the work of those who in Italy are professors of pontifical law, which they teach with great praise both for their talents and industry; but would that it could be said with equal profit for true piety. The regulations of men, since such are generally laid down for the unlearned multitude, bring it about that there will be less crime; but the philosophy of Christ appeals to us on far loftier grounds, and proceeds by other methods.
>
> I admit that to be most true which you not less elegantly than eruditely state, that the early fathers of the Church never better evidenced their talent, their learning, and their eloquence than in their conflicts with heretics, nor ever won more real praise in any other field of endeavor; and into that same field you summon me by the surely glorious examples of Origen, Basil, Cyprian, Jerome, and Augustine. But, when I compare myself with these, straightway, alas, my courage falls down to my feet, to use an expression of Homer's. Would that those powers which many attribute to me were mine in earnest; but I will promise one thing, that I shall not fail the interests of the Church as far as my own share in the work is concerned. Oh, that your forecast of what is to follow might prove untrue, but I, who am not too sagacious, have long since perceived its coming; and if it comes, I fear that in place of the expelled Pontiffs, bishops, and kings, we shall get certain sordid masters more severe than these by far. For long since, those whom they style Anabaptists are muttering anarchy, and breeding other monstrous doctrines, which, if they once burst forth, will make Luther seem almost orthodox in comparison. They are muttering also that baptism is not necessary, either for adults or children. Now, if they also try to persuade, as certain ones are trying to do, that in the Eucharist there is nothing but bread and wine, I do not

see what is left us of the sacraments of the Church. Another set of madmen are now with us, who wish to be considered prophets, but who are laughed at by everybody. Never hitherto did any sect arise which spoke of Christ impiously; but now the tumult of opinion has so emboldened some that they not only dare to speak blasphemously of Christ's divine nature, but also call into question the authority of the entire Scriptures. So it is that, when once the bolts are withdrawn, the rashness of men spreads itself into a field of license, and sets no limits to its insane course, until it involves all things in destruction along with itself.[17]

Then he goes on to point out the faults on both sides, which gives him an opportunity to take a shy at the monks—of which he gladly avails himself. Then he passes on to speak of the form of the Church as depicted by the ruler Esdras, and ends his letter as follows:

There would be good hope, if the Lord would deign to give us a good ruler, such as was Esdras; a good pontiff, such as Josue; a good prophet, such as Aggeus; and such a people that, while crying out upon impious dogmas, and having corrected their evil life by good works, they might build up the city and the house of God. For thus we read: "With one hand he did the work, and with the other held a sword. For every one of the builders was girded with a sword about his reins. And they built, and sounded with a trumpet by me."[18] Now, if all our hope is in the not quite sober shoutings of the few theologians and monks, or if it is placed in the arms and forces of bishops and Cardinals, I shall be surprised if the evil can be cured through those same things whence springs the especial occasion of the evil. But we have not yet deserved that the great ones of the world shall be aroused by the influence of the Spirit. I trust in the Lord, who will not be angry forever.[19] Now deservedly can we say with the Psalmist: "Thou hast cast us off, and hast destroyed us." Would that we might also say this: "Thou hast been angry, and hast had mercy on us. Thou hast moved the earth, and hast troubled it: heal thou the breaches thereof, for it has been moved."[20]

But in sooth I am marvelous impertinent to talk thus to you! Most accomplished prelate, may the Lord protect and prosper you forever. Basle (towards the end of June), 1523.[21]

So we can perceive by this reply to Tunstall that he had as yet resolved on no virile or constructive policy with regard to the Lutheran difficulty, but still maintained his critical attitude towards both sides while trying carefully to fall out with neither. But this latter feat was beyond his power, as we shall now see. There had been some points of attraction between himself and Hutten, of whom we spoke some time back. Whether these consisted in the fact that Hutten, like him-

[17] *Ibid.*, 1369, ll. 14-52.
[18] II Esdras iv, 17-18.
[19] Cf. Ps. cii.
[20] Ps. lix.
[21] Eras. Ep. 1369, ll. 65 *ad fin.*

self, had spent some of his youngest years in a monastery, whence he had incontinently fled at the age of sixteen, or whether it was that he was drawn to Hutten's impatient spirit which felt called upon to rebel against the established at all hazards, or whatever might be the true reason, there is no doubt that in the early period of their intimacy they exercised on each other a mutual charm. Both wielded a trenchant and witty pen, and each had a special *bête noire,* for Erasmus the monks, and for Hutten the Italian Pope. Hutten had spent rather a wild youth, at times a student and at times a soldier, and was equally at home in both occupations. He could scribble a lampoon than which no bludgeon could do fiercer execution, and he could turn off a satire with an edge like a razor. His literary quality was acrid to the highest degree, and in its exercise he feared no living man. His great aim, more political than religious, was to free Germany from the yoke of Rome. The famous *Epistolæ obscurorum virorum* were mostly from his pen, and their incisive wit and coarse humor had a powerful influence in unhinging the ideas of men in those days. But he was erratic. First, he essayed to unite the German princes against the Pope; this failing, he then attempted to unite the nobility against the princes. He made the egregious mistake of assuming that the Emperor Charles V would be pleased to see the power of the German rulers somewhat curbed, and to that end he allied himself with the forces of Franz von Sickengen in an attack on the Elector of Trèves. We can readily see that, to a man of peace like Erasmus, Hutten had become a friend whom it was dangerous any longer to cultivate; for, although Hutten was a likable enough fellow, Erasmus had no desire to become embroiled with half the princes of Europe on his account. It is hard to describe Hutten's relationship to the Reformers. He was not a follower of Luther in the strict sense, but worked with him when it suited his plans. As a matter of fact, he professed fealty to no man, but would work with pen and sword for those whose ideas fitted in with his own general scheme. Things came to such a pass that at last Erasmus cast around for some good reason to sever relations with him before he should become involved with his acts. The irregular and disreputable life that Hutten had led, coupled with the fact that during the course of his dissipated career he had acquired syphilis, made him a very undesirable acquaintance, and it is not to be wondered at that Erasmus received notice of an impending visit from him with some anxiety. On his side Hutten was not slow to perceive Erasmus' pendulum-like mind, and had stormed fiercely at him for his uncertain attitude towards Luther. But greater men than Hutten had failed to move Erasmus in that direction, so we need not wonder that Hutten's visionary schemes had not commended themselves to the older man. But now Hutten had come to the end of his brief career, for he was only thirty-five when he died. Sick of a loathsome disease, penniless, and practically homeless, he was an object of commiseration to all his former friends who had fêted and celebrated him in the heyday of his prosperity. It was just at this especial moment that, hearing his old friend Erasmus was settled very comfortably at Basle, he sent word by their mutual acquaintance

Eppendorff of his intention to come to Basle for the purpose of paying him a visit. We may imagine Erasmus' consternation at the news. Here was the man who had published several pasquinades against the Pope and the Roman Curia already on his way to stay in his house and be his guest. Could anything be more compromising? When Hutten arrived at Basle, consequently, he was given to understand that there was no welcome awaiting him at Erasmus' home, so he had perforce to seek lodgings elsewhere. Erasmus, in his letter to Marcus Laurinus, part of which we have given previously, casually announces the coming of Hutten as follows:

> Hutten was staying here [Basle] for a few days, during which time he neither came to see me, nor I him. And yet, if I had met him, I would not have refused to speak to him, old friend that he is, and whose happy and sociable genius I even now cannot help loving. If he had any business besides this which he wished to transact, it is not my affair. But since on account of his poor health he could not get along without those hot-rooms and I cannot endure them, it happened that we did not meet.[22]

Thereupon the fiery Hutten began to make it very warm for Erasmus by issuing a pamphlet which contained all the various offenses that in his estimation Erasmus had been guilty of during the last five years. This was his famous *Expostulation,* news of the preparation of which was brought to Erasmus by Henry Eppendorff, a young man of "most courteous manners and remarkable learning,"[23] as Erasmus had recently described him. His first impulse was to pass the pamphlet over without any reply; but Eppendorff and Beatus Rhenanus, who were also present with him at that time, persuaded him that Hutten was not the kind of man to endure such treatment, which might thus make matters worse So he agreed to try to soften Hutten's anger by a letter recalling their former friendship, reminding him that the news of a rupture between them would only serve to gratify their mutual enemies. This would probably have proved effective, if he had not assumed a decided *de haut en bas* attitude which exasperated Hutten very much. He did not relish being reminded of his poverty, of his lack of friends and influence, or that his object in taking up with Franz von Sickengen might be interpreted as arising from a love of plunder; and it showed a lack of discretion in Erasmus thus to touch Hutten on the raw. Hutten was no mean opponent, as Erasmus well knew, and it surprises one to see him committing a tactical error such as his shabby treatment of Hutten certainly was. In the past Erasmus could never praise Hutten highly enough, and his letters are full of admiration for him. Long before, when writing to Budé, he went into raptures about him, saying, "I am delighted that you appreciate Hutten, for his wit gives me inexpressible pleasure."[24] And again he express his feelings in his letter to Albert the Cardinal-Elector of Mainz: "Everybody admires more and more the genius of Hutten, and by protecting him your Eminence causes him to be esteemed by all literary men. I

[22] *Ibid.,* 1342, ll. 689-96. [23] *Idem.* [24] *Ibid.,* 778.

flatter myself that he will be a great ornament to Germany if he lives and your Eminence continues to protect him." [25] In another place he calls him the "delight of the Latin tongue." On his side Hutten had recognized in Erasmus the scholar and writer, and was proud to be known as his friend. But, if we may judge by what he says of Erasmus in the *Expostulation,* he was not at all blind to Erasmus' faults; and perhaps that is one reason why he never treated Erasmus with that obsequiousness which was so evident in others. The *camaraderie* so marked in his letters to Erasmus shows very well that he regarded his relation with him as one of perfect equality, and not in any way that of an inferior to a superior. And so he takes Erasmus to task in the pamphlet mentioned above, and ridicules the older man's pretensions to greatness. He laughs sarcastically at Erasmus' threat to strike terror into the Lutheran sect, and recalls to his mind that it was not so very long ago that Erasmus was lecturing the Pope, that he was just as much opposed to *indulgences* as Luther, that he had often ridiculed the church ceremonial, and that he had set himself up as the censor of all things ecclesiastical. He was at a loss to explain this great change that had come over Erasmus, but attributed some of it to his desire for a select and exclusive fame in which lesser lights should have no share; some of it he also set down to Erasmus' pusillanimity and to his chameleon-like nature; and some of it he ascribed to a belief that Erasmus had been bribed by money, or the offer of preferment, to oppose the cause of the Reformers, now that he saw the German princes uniting against them. Such a decision on the part of Erasmus might be easily predicated, he thought, when one considered his smallness of mind and his fears for his own personal interests. Drummond has very well synopsized the *Expostulation,* which is quite lengthy, and our readers may enjoy some of it:

> Hutten then proceeds to enlarge on the charges which he had already laid against Erasmus in his preliminary letter. He is particularly hard upon him for his avowed friendship for Aleander, whom he had once described as the vilest of mankind, a man born for intrigue and deceit, ever faithless and treacherous, ever malignant and maleficent, who used his learning for no other purpose than to injure learning. He had it on the best authority, he said, that when Aleander was the Pope's Legate at the Diet of Worms, Erasmus had declared that he would be compelled to doubt whether there were free men in Germany if he was permitted to depart alive. Yet now he was hand-and-glove with this man, talking with him till midnight, and even arranging with him that they should go to Rome together; this, though it was perfectly well known that Aleander had come expressly to seize Erasmus as the author of all the disturbances in Germany and the ringleader of sedition everywhere, and forebore only because he thought it more politic to proceed by stratagem, and endeavor to gain his services for the Papal party. That Adrian, too, was hostile to him was no fiction of the Luth-

[25] *Ibid.,* 1009.

erans, for it was reported, on the best authority, that while Cardinal in Spain, he had written a letter to Rome reproaching those in power there with wasting their time in disputing with Luther when they ought rather to lay hold of Erasmus, the fountain-head of the evil, and the promoter of rebellion, who was schooling Germany to renounce the authority of the Pope. Yet now he was heaping the most extravagant praises upon this Pope, even before he had held the office long enough to show his real character. And in the same way he praised many of the bitterest opponents of the Reformation, such as Sylvester Prieras and Eck, and even Latomus, Egmund, and Atensis—men whose names would never have been heard of in Germany if it had not been for his invectives against them; and now it seems that Lee, too, must be . . . apologized for. Thus could Erasmus blow hot and cold, condemn and acquit, flatter and abuse, according as his caprice or his interest might suggest.[26]

There is more of it, but perhaps we have given enough of it for the reader to grasp the tenor of the rest. On leaving Basle Hutten had come to reside at Zurich, and on learning this Erasmus had sent a communication to the authorities there praying them to put some restraint on Hutten's literary activities, as he had just published a book against him (Erasmus) full of calumnies and perversions of the truth.[27] Hutten forestalled any such action on the part of the Zurich authorities by removing to the island of Ufnau in the Lake of Zurich, where he died a few days afterwards. Hutten's book was published at Strassburg by John Schott, in the month of July, 1523. Erasmus issued his *Spongia* as a reply in six days, but Froben could not get it off the press on account of other matter until September 3, 1523, when Hutten had been already ten days dead. Poor Hutten! He was a genuine berserker, or if you will, a paladin born too late who died regretted by many. We need not go too deeply into the *Spongia,* of which three or four editions were published almost immediately to meet the demand excited by the controversy. In some of his charges the impetuous Hutten was undoubtedly wrong, or guilty of some exaggeration. But certain of his charges which were undoubtedly true Erasmus meets obliquely, and with an absence of frankness, as for instance, his *volte face* with regard to the divines of Louvain. Hutten lays it against him that in his conversations he used to deal unsparingly with the characters of some of the professors in the Universities of Cologne and Louvain, while now he speaks most honorably of them in his correspondence. Erasmus meets the point by quibbling, and states that he never had a quarrel with either University. But the reader who has followed us thus far knows that this is only an evasion of the real issue, and that Hutten was right in the main. Erasmus said that at both institutions there were some who opposed learning, while we know that Lee, Latomus, Atensis, and even Egmondanus, were scholarly enough to be able to point out the errors in Erasmus' edition of the New Testament, and to demand a con-

[26] *Erasmus,* Vol. II, pp. 126-7.

[27] We may remember that Erasmus tried the same tactics with the printer Froben to prevent the issue of Luther's books.

servatism in the revision of that work which the reverence due to the Scriptures demanded. That cannot be really understood as any opposition to learning, but rather to a fixed resolve on their part not to have the received and venerable text of the Scriptures rashly changed by Erasmus or any other man, without more authority to do so than such a single man's *ipse dixit*. But it is when he comes to speak of the monks that his artifice is most apparent, and here we give it in Drummond's words rather than in our own, for we are willing to confess to a little impatience when Erasmus begins to ride this pet obsession of his:

> So, too, he was accused of having been formerly hostile to the order of preaching friars, whereas now he would persuade the world that he had never wished them ill. He had never been so mad as to wish ill to any order; and if it was right to hate all Dominicans because there are many bad men among them, it would follow that we must hate all orders, as there is none in which there are not a great many bad men.[28]

Hutten stated bluntly that Erasmus had promised to write three dialogues against Luther, and Erasmus did not deny it but neatly deprived the statement of its onus by saying that he had not promised to write against Luther, but on the Lutheran question. Then follows some special pleading which we will give in Drummond's synopsis:

> And yet, if he were to write against Luther [it is Erasmus who is talking], he would be justified in so doing, seeing that he was never in league with him, but, on the contrary, had always dissuaded him from his undertaking. And supposing he had at one time been a supporter of Luther's, did it follow that he must approve of everything he should ever write? What if Luther should write against the Articles of Faith? Must he then be forbidden to write against him? And why should Hutten be so angry with those who write against Luther? If Luther's doctrine is true, it will acquire new brilliancy by contradiction, like gold purified by fire; but if it is false, it is well that all should oppose it. Will it subvert the entire Gospel to dispute with Luther whether every Christian is a priest, or whether all the works of the saints are sins? Not that he has any desire to enter into conflict with Luther, but he must answer Hutten's calumnies. On the contrary, he had resorted to every expedient, he had done and suffered everything; he had left the Emperor's dominions, and had refused the emoluments offered to him, in order to escape being drawn into this "gladiatorial arena." . . . But Hutten, having falsely charged him with hostility to Luther, was obliged to invent a cause for it, and the reason he assigned was jealousy of Luther's fame, because his works were now more widely read than those of Erasmus. He did not envy Luther's fame, and he would rather be obscurer than any dog than enjoy such a reputation as his.
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> Neither had Erasmus uttered an uncertain sound regarding the

[28] *Op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 133.

Roman See. Her tyranny, rapacity, and other vices, which are an old theme of complaint among all good men, he had never approved. He had nowhere entirely condemned indulgences, however much he abhorred the shameless way in which they were bought and sold. What his opinion was about ceremonies was clear from many passages in his works: but when had he ever execrated the canon law and the pontifical decrees? What Hutten might mean by "calling the Pope to order," he did not very well know; and here Erasmus gives his own view of the Papal supremacy. . . . "In the first place, he [Hutten] will admit, I suppose, that there is a Church at Rome. For a preponderance of bad people does not invalidate its character as a true Church; otherwise we should have no Churches whatever. I presume too it is orthodox; for in whatever proportion the impious may be mingled with the faithful, nevertheless the Church remains in the hands of the latter. Now, I suppose, he will set a bishop over this Church. This bishop he will allow to be a Metropolitan; seeing there are so many Archbishops in countries where no Apostle has ever been, while Rome has both Peter and Paul, beyond dispute two of the greatest. Now among Metropolitans what absurdity is there, if the first place be assigned to the Roman Pontiff? For as to the extravagant power which they have usurped for some centuries past, no one has ever heard me defend it." It is true, as Hutten says, and would it were possible to deny it, that Rome has been for many years the source of great evils to the world, but we have now a Pope from whom the best things may be expected, and if Hutten has declared war not on men, but on error, let him hasten to Rome and help this excellent Pope in his efforts for reform. "But Hutten has declared war on the Roman Pope and all his adherents." Has he declared war even on a good Pope? . . .

It was utterly untrue that he [Erasmus] was preparing to take flight to the victorious party. All he desired was tranquillity to do good as he had opportunity. . . . What most offended him in Luther's writings was his abusive language and his arrogance, nor can Hutten deny that he wants moderation and gentleness. He [Erasmus] cannot persuade himself that the meek spirit of Christ dwells in that bosom from which flows so much bitterness. What right had he to say, for example, in his book in reply to the King of England, "Come, Master Henry, and I will teach you?" The King's book was in good Latin and contained marks of erudition; yet some thought such insolence wonderfully funny. . . .

Erasmus had somewhere written that the truth should not be told on all occasions, and that the manner of telling it made a great difference, and this sentiment had excited the fury of Hutten, who declared that it ought to be thrust down his own throat. He [Erasmus] defended it, however, by the example of Christ, who, when he first sent forth the apostles to preach the Gospel, forbade them to make it known that he was the Christ.[29]

[29] *Ibid.*, Vol. II, pp. 136-41.

As we have stated, Hutten was beyond all earthly regard for what Erasmus might say or do by the time the *Spongia* was published; but his death aroused no charitable feelings towards him in the breast of Erasmus. He tried his best to have Hutten's publisher Schott punished for printing Hutten's *Expostulation,* and now that his antagonist was dead he did not hesitate to speak ill of him in the preface to a later edition of the *Spongia.* Using a rhetorical figure of speech, he says he will not recount Hutten's faults, and then he proceeds to tell posterity what they were in the following very enlightening sentence:

> I nowhere in my *Spongia* bring against him his licentiousness, of which not even the miserable disease from which he suffered could cure him, nor his fondness for women and gambling, his profuse extravagance, his debts, and his duns.

Thereupon Luther, whom he had so often accused of violence, naïvely asks, "If this is to use a sponge, what would he call reviling and abuse?"

Eppendorff, who was a mutual friend to both, resented Erasmus' treatment of Hutten, and even went to the length of writing some expostulatory letters, but unfortunately these have not come down to us. A rather good reply to Erasmus' *Spongia* was made by an ex-Carthusian monk named Otto von Brunfels, of which several editions were published, much to the disgust of Erasmus, so Hutten was not entirely unavenged.

As he passes off the stage, Hutten leaves us with the impression of a very picturesque character. From his very earliest youth he was in rebellion against his environment, resembling in this respect Erasmus. But he was never actuated by altruistic motives any more than was Erasmus, yet differed from him in having implicit faith in the virtue of force. He was more a political than a religious reformer, and cared little what people believed, provided that they did not thereby replenish the coffers of the Roman court. His main object seemed to be expressed in the throwing off of all allegiance to the Roman See on the part of Germany; and he thought he saw in Luther the man to bring this about. As a powerful adjutant in this cause he looked to Erasmus for moral aid and encouragement, and when the latter refused to be identified openly with Lutheranism he was much disappointed, as we have already seen. In spite of his share in the *Epistolæ obscurorum virorum* and his other pasquinades, he does not seem to have been of much assistance to the cause of Luther, nor of much detriment to the cause of the Church. One thing he did do, however, in his unauthorized publication of Erasmus' letter, to which we have already referred: he put in type Erasmus' position on the supremacy of the Pope. The statement was made: from this time forward the great humanist, whose pronouncements on this and kindred subjects the world was awaiting, never wavered in his conviction that the occupant of the See of Peter was the head of the Church.

CHAPTER XV

ACCESSION OF CLEMENT VII: ERASMUS FINALLY WRITES AGAINST LUTHER: PUBLICATION DELAYED: CORRESPONDENCE OF ERASMUS AND LUTHER

On the fourteenth day of September in this same year of 1523, Pope Adrian died, after a short reign of twenty months. As we have already pointed out, Erasmus had been a disappointment to him. He had asked him to come to Rome, he had exhorted him to write against Luther, and the plan promised by Erasmus which was to end the Lutheran schism turned out to be nothing more tangible than a scheme to refer to a few learned men (that is, a Council) what all the learned men in the world could not decide. Adrian perceived that this was chimerical and probably put forth by Erasmus to forestall action on the part of the Pope, or of the Emperor, looking to his answering Luther, and which action could scarcely fail to be somewhat compulsory. Erasmus, in one of his letters to a friend, expresses surprise that Adrian was changed in his regard. Adrian had done a great service to him in silencing Stunica and some others of his opponents; but the Pope could not be deaf to the constant reports that reached him of the vacillating way in which Erasmus was acting towards the friends of Luther. But Adrian was snatched untimely away, and Erasmus breathed more easily.

Opinions differ on the character of Pope Adrian VI, according as they emanate from one side or the other. He was not at home in Rome: he was a stranger in a strange land. Sanuto in his diary quotes a letter in which it is said that Adrian was "tenacious of his own, rarely giving and rarely accepting from others, and that no one could tell for whom he had regard. He was not moved by anger, nor amused with joking. He was not puffed up with his position, but, on the contrary, was very much cast down when the news of his election was announced to him." [1]

And no wonder he displayed such characteristics, for the outlook was appalling in this the very darkest hour of the Papacy. Where was he to look for help in his task of extirpating abuses, of reforming a Curia which flourished on corruption, and of correcting the glaring faults of his very own household? Abroad he had to restrain the rash and warlike kings of Europe who were longing to rush upon one another. He

[1] See letter from Servus Frater Vincentius de Sancto Geminiano dated from Vittorio, Spain, March 10, 1522, and addressed to Cardinal de Flisco, at Rome, in *I Diarii di Marino Sanuto,* Vol. XXXIII, col. 203. It seemed to be a rather unfriendly or rather negative description *de vita et conditione Summi Pontificis Hadriani VI.*

had to make headway against the threatened revolt of almost the whole of Germany, and to direct the attention of all to the common danger which was menacing Europe from the side of the Turks. Christendom had to be saved from both external and internal enemies, for if Adrian failed in this it would be all over with the Christian religion. But each king and petty princeling looked on the Pope as a tool to be used to subserve his own interests, and self was the order of the day. Could anything be more disheartening? And yet he was not discouraged, but, bracing himself manfully to adjust the spiritual forces of the Church to the task which had to be done, he called on all—Erasmus among the rest—to assist in the work. He started laying the foundations for a new order of things, and, though he had barely touched the very beginnings when he was taken away, what he did in this regard was well and permanently done. And as von Höfler says in his life of this Pope:

> It was for Adrian no slight triumph that, when Pope Paul III took up again the reforming of the Church in earnest, he confessed that this reform was to be accomplished on the principles which the Dutch Pope had laid down.[2]

And he adds with truth that that fact is the best justification of Adrian's pontificate with regard to the Romans. He recognized that simony was rampant close at hand, and that all sorts of petty tyranny and extortion were being practised in the name of the Pope. He decided to reform and restore the Church according to the decrees of the Councils and the Canons. He appealed to the Cardinals and bishops to be the first to set a good example in the proposed work, and he indicated to the monasteries that had become lax that a house cleaning was needed. He pointed out to the world that if Rhodes and Hungary fell before the victorious Turk, European civilization and the Christian religion would be destroyed. It was a herculean task to accomplish results among these various clashing interests, angry passions, and selfish preferences that acted and reacted upon Adrian; but he kept his purpose inflexibly in view, refusing to be swerved therefrom, and, as Clerk described him, "stood unshakable like a rock in the sea beaten on all sides by the waves." [3] All authorities agree that he was an earnest and sincere man, personally clean and of unblemished reputation; and we may justly assume that, had not death carried him off so soon, the history of the Reformation might have been differently written. In any case, the history of the Counter-Reformation dates from his pontificate.

On the nineteenth of November, 1523, a new Pope succeeded to the pontifical throne. This was Julius de' Medici, cousin of Leo X, and now by virtue of his position head of that aspiring and contentious house. Although he had early adopted the military profession, it was as a Knight of Jerusalem, an Order which united the characters of the soldier and the monk, the members of this Order taking the usual vows

[2] *Papst Adrian VI,* p. 557.

[3] "Pontifex, velut rupes in mari sita vndique petita fluctibus, mansit immobilis." (Clerk was Cardinal Wolsey's ambassador to the Roman court at this time.) Brewer, *Letters and Papers of the Reign of Henry VIII,* Vol. III, part 2, 5092.

of chastity and obedience, that he was elected Pope. He was a grave and dignified man, whose advice and sagacity had been of great service to Pope Leo X, whose levity and prodigality, says Roscoe, he corrected by his own austerity, prudence, and regularity.[4] Since he was a Medici, however, the promptings of ambition were not long in taking possession of him, and he began to devote himself to what he considered the temporal interests of the Church rather than to its spiritual interests as they had appealed to Adrian. Early in his reign, however, he intimated that he was well disposed towards Erasmus, a circumstance that the Roman friends of the great writer interpreted as of good augury, should Erasmus finally decide to settle in Rome. As usual, Erasmus was flattered at this manifestation of good will on the part of the new Pontiff, and hastened to assure his Holiness of his gladness at hearing the news of his elevation to the supreme head of the Church. But although he wrote to the Cardinal of Sion that he would certainly go to Rome as soon as the weather and his health permitted, he seems not to have harbored any serious idea of leaving Basle, where he was, as it were, on neutral ground, being under the jurisdiction of neither the Emperor, the King of France, nor the Pope. The only disadvantage in his settled resolve to stay at Basle was that the Emperor required him to reside in his own country if he expected his salary as imperial councilor to be continued to him. But Erasmus had rendered such a move hazardous by constantly referring to Egmondanus as a fool, a madman, a drunkard, and hurling other opprobrious epithets, for we must now note the fact that Egmondanus had been made one of the Inquisitors for Brabant. The other one was Hoogstraaten, who also was not overcordial to him, Erasmus felt. It must be admitted that, if Erasmus realized the consideration and respect with which his letters were regarded by all, he was exceedingly incautious in expressing therein his opinions of those whom he hated, since he was well aware that his letters were having a wide and various circulation, and that his sentiments about men and things were sure to be freely quoted. At times he seems to have been struck with the necessity for caution, and acted accordingly; but at other times he flung discretion to the winds, and said his say regardless of consequences. So he had delivered himself of his opinion of Egmondanus, and consequently felt safer from him at Basle than at Louvain. As a matter of history, Egmondanus was not nearly as Erasmus has painted him. That he was a fanatic is possible; that he was a drunkard and madman is not now held. As a matter of fact, he was open and frank in his dealings with other men; and if he disliked Erasmus he told him so to his face, a statement for which we have Erasmus' own word. And this is in strong contrast to what Jortin says of Erasmus: "He was incapable either of dissembling thoroughly, or of speaking the truth fully, when and where it was dangerous."[5]

This, as we have already noted, is particularly noticeable in the reasons he alleges for not going to Rome. The following letter to Cardinal Campegio will show us more of them:

[4] See Roscoe's *Leo X*, Vol. I, p. 83. [5] *Erasmus*, Vol. I, p. 299.

From your last letter I have received the great and joyful tidings that Clement VII, of the illustrious family of the Medici, has been elected to rule over the destinies of mankind; and although I have not had the pleasure of knowing him except from your letter and that of Pace, yet it is strange how my mind, not without reason, I think, presages some great felicity. Your last letter doubled my joy by informing me that you have been appointed legate to our Germany, in order to compose by your wisdom and authority the unhappy tumults of these times, which are most distressing to every good man, and to me to the extent that I lose my zest for living. Although you have surely taken upon yourself a task full of difficulty and unpleasantness, yet I have great hopes that the dexterity of your mind, and your prudence which is on a par with your kindness, will overcome every difficulty, especially as Christ will further your holy endeavors. And would that I might be able here now to contribute something of moment! for in no other matter would I more willingly engage myself. But this little body of mine, weak as it is, becomes more feeble each day by reason of old age. A most atrocious gravel pain, moreover, so bothers me that at times I am in danger of dying. During the month of July, for example, and even longer, I suffered most intensely, so that there was small hope for my recovery. At Christmas I had a still more grievous attack, so that I longed for death, and never expected to get well. For no death can be more painful than such suffering. The forces of my frail body are so afflicted and shattered by my complaint that it is only by the greatest care in every direction that I subsist. Hence I have long since sold my horses, despairing of ever enduring the motion in the saddle.

Now, even if I had the strength, I could not go to your Eminence at this time, for I should be exposed on the journey to the stoves, the odor of which takes the life out of me even at a single meal. This forces me to remain in my own home at Basle, which has a parlor with a fireplace, and this at my own great expense and trouble. Furthermore, I shall not be able to leave here until the middle of Lent on account of the work which I am writing and the printers are issuing at the same time. I have decided, however, to take a little holiday from my graver studies this summer, so that, if I only have fair health, when the German stoves cease to roar, I will gladly betake myself to your vicinity [Nuremberg], unless something occurs to call me elsewhere. For the Emperor and the most illustrious Margaret summon me back to Brabant to take part in the embassy which they are preparing for Rome, for the purpose of tendering their obedience to the new Pope.

In the meantime there shall be no effort lacking on my part as to any matter which commends itself to you. I have no influence with the Germans, as popular as I was with them at one time. All their good will perished when I began to "oppose the Gospel," for that is how they express it. So much hatred have I stirred up that I should have preferred to die, for death would have been prefer-

able to throwing myself into some faction contrary to the concord of the Church. My own learning is below mediocrity; yet I would willingly devote it to such a cause, but more than that, I would also call other learned friends into council; such a one I hold especially to be Louis Ber, who presides over the College of St. Peter here, a man endowed with wonderful gifts of body and mind, with great influence among his own people, and himself illustrious by virtue of his rank, the integrity of his life, and his uncommon learning. At Paris he won first place in the examination for degrees in theology. As for myself, meanwhile, I have to take care that I may not be plucked off by the Germans, not to mention the beldames,[6] before I leave Germany. For there are many who boast that they are evangelical when they are diabolical rather, and ready for any crime. And I know not for what reason they rage at me in particular, and blame it on me that they are not victorious; for so they say. Already some of their screeds are flying about, and they have others in preparation with which they threaten me. I have no doubt that your prudence will meet the situation with the very best measures; but I think you will succeed better if you make manifest your lofty impartiality, and show that you are more desirous of curing than crushing this evil thing, that you do not wish to pluck up the cockle and at the same time to uproot the wheat, and that you will not refuse to change some things which, without any loss of Apostolic dignity and evangelical piety, could and should be changed. In the meantime, let them cease from libelous books and attempts at sedition, until by the authority of the Pope and the princes something shall be determined which will restore public concord and preserve it once it is restored. Germany far and wide is exposed. You will accomplish a divine mission if you restore peace within its borders. . . .

I have written to Pope Clement, and have sent him his copy of my *Paraphrase*. If you are writing to him, as you often will, I beg that you will advise him to restrain Stunica from his insane methods, who, while he is catering to his own distemper and the private grudges of some other people, is harming the Pope's cause. May the great God keep you safe and sound. Basle, February 21, 1524.[7]

His advice to the Cardinal and through him to the new Pope was decidedly sound as to the making of the few changes in discipline that

[6] "Mihi tamen interim cauendum ne discerpar a Germanis, ne dicam manis . . ." Erasmus' pun here has always caused difficulty in translation. Professor Allen feels it to be based on a saying of Amerbach's, that Germania had become μανία (see Eras. Ep. 1422, l. 54n.); but I take it to be the medieval *mana*, which meant *mater, anus femina aetate prouectior* (see du Cange, *Glossarium mediæ et infimæ Latinitatis*, Vol. V, p. 205, *in loco*). It is to be remembered that the public sermons against him, of which Erasmus so often complains, must have roused an ignorant hatred among a few harridans. It is doubtful if Amerbach's epigram, by means of which Professor Allen interprets this passage, would be of sufficiently wide currency to be intelligible to Cardinal Campegio.

[7] Eras. Ep. 1422.

the times demanded, but as to any service that such advice might accomplish in bringing Luther and his partisans into amity with the Church again it was certainly useless. We have a faint suspicion that he himself recognized the fact, and that the main object of his letter, apart from the courtesies of the occasion, was to obtain the silencing of Stunica, who was causing him great anxiety, since on the death of Pope Adrian, who had forbidden him further to attack Erasmus, he felt himself free to assail him again. So, not content with asking for the intervention of Cardinal Campegio in this matter, Erasmus hastened to write to Pope Clement himself with this same purpose in view, as well as to assure the Pope of his unswerving fidelity to the Holy See and his total dissociation from Luther and his party. In his letter to Pope Clement he says:

> . . . If your Holiness could only know with what fidelity, with what constancy, I have behaved in this affair [of Luther], and that neither the solicitations of mighty princes, nor the machinations of learned friends, nor again the hatred of certain theologians and monks who, by reason of my services to the study of the languages and good literature, hate me even worse than they hate Luther, have been able to force me to associate myself with the promoters of this seditious undertaking, or to conspire against the dignity of your See. And because on this account I am enduring so much hostility and menaces from the Germans, your Holiness will deem it unfair that Stunica should so often and with such impunity rage at me with his furious and much-talked-of screeds, which bring disgrace on Rome and hatred on the name of the Pontiff. For he everywhere boasts that he is voicing the sentiment of your beloved city of Rome, although it is a fact that he is acting contrary to the commands of the Cardinals and contrary to the orders of Leo and Adrian. Believe me, most Holy Father, those persons who are prompting this comedian to whom such calumnies come naturally are serving very poorly either the pontifical dignity or the interests of public tranquillity, but are yielding to their own private animosities in this thing, as well as manifesting a strange sort of insanity.
>
> He has collected from all the books which I issued before the name of Luther was heard of, a few bits and scraps which he corrupts and interprets in the worse sense possible, but in such a manner that, even without anyone replying to him, any reader with the slightest sense of fairness will execrate the mind of such a fellow. If it be proper to calumniate people in that way, I will find you many things in the works of Jerome and Bernard. When I wrote I never in the least suspected that these times were at hand, for, had I known it, I should have passed over many of these matters in silence, or I should have written them otherwise; not that they are impious, but that the evil-minded lay hold of everything which suits their purpose. . . .
>
> I have always submitted myself and my works to the judgment of the Roman Church, and will not object even if she pass upon

me an adverse decision, for I will endure everything rather than become seditious. But my confidence is very firm that your Holiness's sense of justice will not allow me to be given up to the insane hatreds of a few people.

As a pledge of my intentions towards you, I am sending you my *Paraphrase on the Acts of the Apostles,* which by chance has been just now issued from the press. I had destined it for the Cardinal of York, whose most loving patronage I enjoy for a long time past; but I have changed my mind, and will dedicate to him the book *On Freewill* against Luther which I now have in hand, and which I think will be more acceptable to him. The Emperor and Margaret [the Emperor's aunt] are inviting me back to Brabant; and the French king is enticing me with mountains of gold to go to his court. But nothing shall tear me away from Rome, only death, or the gravel, more cruel still, provided I shall feel that your sense of justice will be my future protection against my calumniators. I do not expect that my teachings will be approved by all, but I do trust that my fidelity and sincerity of conscience will speak in my behalf with all good and fair-minded men.

Most Holy Father, I pray that it may be the wish of the Lord Jesus to make you the restorer and maintainer of a new and golden age; for this is what we all vehemently desire and confidently expect, to whom this schism is with reason distressing. Basle, February 13, 1524. P. S. Believe me, your Holiness will surpass the glory of all other Popes if you shall succeed in calming the tumults caused by these wars and these new-fangled notions; you will accomplish the one by showing yourself to be the peer of any king, the other by giving us to hope that you are willing to alter certain things which are susceptible of change without detriment to piety.[8]

How Clement was going to show himself the equal of any or all kings and to put an end to war without fighting himself is somewhat of a problem, but rhetorical flourishes are not always logical. The most important item in this letter is the news that Erasmus was now at work on his famous book against Luther, *On Freewill.* From this we can now finally assume that he was henceforth definitely arrayed in opposition to the Reformer and on the side of the Church, due regard being had to his personal interests and safety at all times. The gentle hint that Cardinal Wolsey was a munificent patron of his was not lost on the Pope, for Erasmus informs us that he sent him a present of two hundred florins in recognition of the *Paraphrase.* Referring to his statement to Pope Clement that the Emperor and the Regent Margaret were inviting him to Brabant, this is putting it very mildly, for the truth was that they were demanding his return under penalty of losing his pension. He had hinted that if his pension were not paid he might feel himself under the necessity of accepting the offer of the French king, who had promised him five hundred crowns to come and reside at his court; and this had highly incensed Margaret, who was then

[8] *Ibid.,* 1418.

ruling Brabant for the Emperor, so that she directed her secretary Carondelet to express to Erasmus her sentiments on his behavior. This brought from him a speedy letter of excuse, in which the real reason for his not wishing to return to Brabant appeared, namely, that he was afraid of Egmondanus, who might hale him before the Inquisition. There may have been some truth in this; however, we must do Egmondanus the justice to observe that he did not rely on his office as Inquisitor to call Erasmus to account, but had issued a book in which he sternly reprehended him for his virulent abuse and constant attacks on monks and the monastic institution in general. What particularly galled Erasmus was that Egmondanus had written his work in the Dutch language, which was their native tongue, since they were both Dutch. Egmondanus gave as his reason for this one that was very natural, namely, that he could not hope to cope with Erasmus in fluency and ease of Latin expression; but Erasmus insisted with all the causticity of a suspicious nature that the real motive was to bring his supposed delinquencies the better before the eyes of their fellow-countrymen. As we have not time to dwell on the strictures of Egmondanus, we need not dilate on the reply of Erasmus more than to say that Egmondanus must certainly have touched him on the quick, since Erasmus replied with considerable heat and could not write a letter to any of his friends without speaking of this detested foe. It is saddening to see this old man, in these his declining years, irritated, baited, and harassed by those whom his exasperating tongue and pen had raised up against him, shrinking from the conflicts that he had invited, and looking for succor in his distress to those who were higher up. Thus he writes for comfort to his old friend Bombace at Rome:

> Besides the fact that everything is in a state of tumult [at Louvain], a weapon has been put into the hands of a certain Carmelite there who is clearly insane, and who hates me worse than he hates Luther, perceiving that language and good literature are flourishing here [at Basle] more than they like to see.

Then he goes on to say:

> At Rome they make me out to be a Lutheran, but in Germany I am held as an extreme anti-Lutheran. . . . I suppose you are aware of the defamatory pamphlet which Hutten got out against me. Besides him many others have books in preparation, and are ready to launch them on the first occasion that I shall write against Luther. And yet, urged as I am on all sides by kings and my own friends, I have assumed that task, although I know that I shall bring about nothing but a renewal of these tumults. For there is nothing more pertinacious than these people; and you would hardly believe how numerous they are. Meanwhile, during the interregnum, Stunica at Rome has returned to his miserable work, as I hear. Such is the bad luck of Erasmus. Of this present Pontiff my mind has very happy presentiments, and I will crawl thither if I can, even though only half alive.[9]

[9] *Ibid.*, 1411.

It was evidently with a mind full of uncertainty as to the wisdom of his resolve that he set himself to write against Luther his famous book, *On Freewill*. He finished the first rough draft in short order, as he was always a swift writer, and it occurred to him that it might not be a bad idea to let his English friends know that he had finally decided to accede to their wishes in this regard. Although he might have sent the news to More, Fisher, Warham, Wolsey, Tunstall, Pace, or any one of many others, he had become accustomed by this time to deal with kings and Popes so familiarly that he chose Henry VIII to be the depository of his aims and aspirations in reference to this important work. Besides, he felt that as the king himself had written so recently against Luther, it would be a recognition of Henry as a coworker in the same field, and a subtle bit of flattery at the same time. Since it had become by this time generally noised about that Erasmus had in hand this work against Luther, it soon came to the ears of Luther himself, who hastened to ward off attack from this quarter if possible, since he had formerly counted on the help of Erasmus in the work of assailing the Papacy, and, failing to secure his active participation, had counted at least on his neutrality. Now, he heard that Erasmus was to take the field against him; but to a man with the mental cerebration of Luther a thousand Erasmuses more or less would have made no difference. So he wrote to him in a curious strain of caustic criticism mingled with commiseration for his weaknesses, showing him plainly that, though he might impose on the uninitiated, he could not hope to do so on a seasoned campaigner like himself, and advising him for his own peace of mind to cease to be a competitor in the arena, and to take his ease as a spectator hereafter. And then he flatly told him that he was not exempt from criticism, and that he had as much right to be found fault with as anybody else:

> Grace and peace to you from the Lord Jesus Christ. I have kept silent long enough, dearest Erasmus, expecting that you, being older and of higher station, would break the silence; yet since I have waited so long in vain, respect compels me to proceed. I do not hold it against you that you keep yourself aloof from me, the better to safeguard your interests with mine enemies the Papists. Nor was I much offended by the bitterness and acerbity with which you criticized me in many passages of your printed works in order to win their favor or mitigate their asperity. For I saw that the Lord had not yet bestowed on you the fortitude, or even the discernment, freely and confidently to join with me in attacking these monsters; nor am I the sort of man to exact from you that which is beyond your strength and capacity. Nay, I have tolerated and honored your weakness and the amount of the gift of God which you possess. For surely the whole world is unable to deny this, that it was a magnificent and remarkable gift of God to you for which we should be grateful, that learning reigns and flourishes, by means of which we arrive at a pure text of the Sacred Scriptures. Now I myself have never desired that you should enter

into my camp and forsake or neglect your own sphere. Although your wit and eloquence might have been of much value to me, yet, if your heart is not in the matter, it were safer for you to serve the Lord in your own way. This only I feared, that, if you were induced by mine enemies to publish books attacking my teachings, then I should be compelled to resist you to your face. I have certainly restrained some who had works ready with which to drag you into the arena, and that was why I wished that Hutten had not issued his *Expostulation,* and much less you your *Spongia,* in which, unless I am mistaken, you already feel how easy it is to write of moderation and to accuse Luther of the lack of it, but how difficult, and even impossible, it is to act with moderation unless one is endowed with the special grace of the Holy Ghost. Therefore, you may believe or not, just as you like, though Christ is my witness, I am sincerely grieved for your sake that the zealous resentments of so many and such eminent persons have been aroused against you; and I cannot believe that you are unmoved at that fact, since human courage like yours must find such attacks unendurable. And yet, perhaps, it is a just zeal that actuates them, and they feel that you have provoked them in an unworthy manner. And to speak plainly, since there are some such, every man having his own infirmity, who cannot bear your acrimony and dissimulation (which you wish to have taken for prudence and moderation), they certainly have reason to be indignant, although they would not be so if they had more greatness of spirit. Although I too am irritable, and have very often been provoked into writing harshly, yet I have never done so except in the case of perversely persistent and ungovernable people. Moreover, I consider that my generosity and gentleness towards those who are sinful and impious, however insane and wicked they may have been, have been plainly manifest, not only as testified to by my own conscience, but is also within the knowledge of many others. So hitherto I have restrained my pen whenever you have provoked me, and have even written letters to my friends, which you have also read, promising to restrain myself unless you should appear openly against me. For although you think not as I do, and condemn or leave in doubt impiously or insincerely many points of religious belief, yet I cannot and will not believe you to be perverse. But now what shall I do? The situation on both sides is most acute. It would be my earnest wish, if I could be a mediator, that they would cease to attack you with such rancor and allow your old age to rest in peace with the Lord. This they would surely do, in my opinion, if they took into consideration your weakness and reflected on the greatness of the cause, which has long since exceeded the scope of your abilities, especially since the movement has now arrived at that stage where there is little to be feared even if Erasmus attacks it with all his power, and not as now when he is only scattering darts and showing his teeth once in a while. Again, if you, my dear Erasmus, will bear in mind the infirmities of these people, abstain from your

witty but bitter rhetorical sallies; and if you cannot or dare not stand up for my teachings, then at least let them alone and follow your own special work. For there is ample reason why they take your censures amiss, even in your own judgment, namely, because human infirmity dwells on the authority and the name of Erasmus, and fears it very much; and it is a much more serious matter to be once gored by Erasmus than to be set upon by all the Papists together. I have desired to say these things, Erasmus, in testimony of the sincerity of my intentions, and wishing that the Lord might give you a spirit worthy of your reputation; but, if the Lord delays in giving such a spirit to you, I beg of you that, if you cannot offer any assistance, you will remain only a spectator of my tragedy and not join the forces of my adversaries, and particularly that you will not publish any works against me as I will not publish any against you; and, finally, that you will consider those who complain in that they are assailed because of Luther to be just like you and myself, whom we must spare and forgive, and, as Paul says, "Bear one another's burdens." There has been enough gnawing; now we must see to it that we are not eaten up each by the other. What makes the spectacle more wretched is that we feel most assured that neither side is sincerely opposed to religion, and that without perversity each is pleased with his own. Kindly pardon my poor way of expressing myself, and farewell in the Lord. In April, 1524.[10]

This was the letter of a man who was totally unafraid of Erasmus and took no pains to conceal it. He had not hesitated to show him that the cause of Lutheranism, whatever that term might include in the year 1524, was now far beyond any efforts of Erasmus either to make or mar. He had given him credit for the results of his great scholarship, but had intimated not too kindly that he was now superannuated, and that even in his best days his capacity, outside of his learning, was never very great. He even commented on his physical weakness, and used the word *imbecillitas* to express it, which was particularly daring because in the Latin, besides the obvious meaning which Luther attached to it, the word suggested helplessness and impotency. He had never been blinded to Erasmus' failings by the glamor of his fame, and had long ago pointed out to Spalatin that one of the great writer's weaknesses was a craving for glory. "I remember," he writes, "when he said in his preface to his *New Testament* that the Christian easily contemns glory, to have said in my heart, 'Oh, Erasmus, I fear you are deceiving yourself, for it is a great thing to despise glory.'"[11] Luther's letter, couched as it was in the bluntest terms, must have touched Erasmus to the quick; but just now he did not care to invite Luther's violence by replying in a similar tone. Besides, he felt he had a rod in pickle for him in the work he was preparing on Freewill, and that he would better save himself for that effort. So he replied in a few simple but pregnant paragraphs:

[10] De Wette, *Luthers Briefe,* Vol. II, p. 498.
[11] *Ibid.,* Vol. II, p. 50.

I do not admit that you love evangelical sincerity more than I do, for there is nothing that I will not endure in its behalf, and up to the present moment I have sought every occasion to make the Gospel common to all. Moreover, what you style my weakness or my ignorance is partly conscience, partly good judgment. In reading your works I greatly fear that Satan in some way is deluding your mind, while other things of yours so captivate me that I wish my fears to be false. I am unwilling to profess what I am not yet persuaded of, much less that which I do not understand. So far I have helped the interests of the Gospel much better than many who boast that they are Evangelicals. I perceive arising many abandoned and seditious men on account of all this. I observe a decline of literature and the sciences. I remark a severing of friendships, and fear that this tumult may turn out to be a bloody one. If your mind is sincere, I pray God that he will favor what you are doing. For myself nothing shall so corrupt me that I shall knowingly betray the Gospel for human reasons.

I have written nothing so far against you that I did not see could be done without injury to the Gospel, although by writing I could have won great applause from princes. I have been opposed to those only who endeavored to persuade the rulers that there was a compact between you and me, that we agreed in everything, and that whatever you taught was in my works. This opinion can scarcely even now be torn from the minds of some of them. Whatever you write against me gives me no great concern. When I consider the world, nothing could fall out more happily for me. I desire to render this soul of mine to Christ pure, and I want every one to be of the same frame of mind. If you are prepared to give a reason to all for the faith that is in you, why do you take it in bad part that any one should dispute with you for the sake of learning better? Perhaps Erasmus by writing against you may do more good to the cause of the Gospel than some foolish scribblers of your own party who will not suffer a man to be a quiet spectator of these contentions; and oh! that they may not have a tragical issue. But they drive me to the direct opposite of your course, even if our monarchs did not demand it. Their wickedness renders the Gospel hateful to those who are inclined to be prudent, and compels their rulers to crush their tumults. Now that cannot be done without injuring the innocent. They listen to no one, not even to you. They fill the world with crazy books, for sake of which they deem it proper to contemn the orthodox fathers.

But it would take too long to write about such matters. I pray that the Lord may turn all things to His glory. You cry for moderation in my *Spongia,* when in that work I said not a word about Hutten's life, his luxury, his mistresses, his most abandoned methods of gambling, his vainglorious boastings which had become intolerable to even his most patient friends, his wastefulness, his extortion of money from the Carthusians, his cutting off the ears of two Dominican monks, his assault and robbery of three abbots

on the public thoroughfare, on account of which one of his servants was decapitated, as well as other well-known villainies. And while he was never provoked to it by a word from me, he broke friendship with me in favor of a most abandoned rascal, and charged me with such a load of false crimes as no buffoon would charge another with. I do make mention of his most perfidiously making public my letter to [Albert of] Mainz with the suppression of his own name; but I say not a word about another perfidious act which he perpetrated on me. He induced me to commend him to the Emperor's court by many letters, although he had already conspired against the Emperor, desiring only to abuse the name of the Emperor in order to get a wife. Under such provocation by him whom I had befriended, was I not within my rights to express myself thereon? And yet I am called immoderate. Why is Otto [Brunfels] standing with Hutten? I never by a single word offended him for which he should now rage at me. And you call such men like to me? I do not consider them men but rather furies, so far am I from admitting them like to me. Is it by such monsters as these, forsooth, that the Church shall be restored? Has the newborn Church such columns as these? Shall I entangle myself in such a compact? . . .

May the Lord direct your mind unto those counsels that are worthy of His Gospels. Basle, May 8, 1524.[12]

Luther made no immediate answer to this letter, as it seemed to require none. Besides, he had too much on his own hands to occupy and render his mind anxious, for Carlstadt had taken the bit of revolt in his teeth and was running away to destruction. This man, who was Luther's senior by about two years, was professor of theology at the University of Wittemberg, and had thrown himself with ardor into furthering the aims and objects of Luther. But he was even more impatient than his leader, and took attitudes on religious questions which did not always approve themselves to Luther's judgment. He early came in conflict with the Church authorities, and was signally refuted by the famous Dominican John Eck in the public disputation held at Leipzig, a defeat which did not entirely displease Luther, for Carlstadt was very vain and gave promise of becoming troublesome to the Wittemberg reformers. We will quote here from a Protestant writer and ripe scholar, H. W. Erbkam, professor of theology at the University of Koenigsberg:

Carlstadt was, no doubt, sincerely devoted to the cause of the Reformation: but he was vain; he wanted to be first, the leader, whenever he took part in any thing, and that was just the very position which he was utterly unable to occupy. While Luther was away in the Wartburg, Carlstadt found the field free; and by the impetuosity and rashness of his character he carried not only the populace, but also the council and the university, into a most danger-

[12] Eras. Ep. 1445.

ous revolution. Christmas Day, 1521, he celebrated the Lord's Supper in his church, leaving out all the most essential features of the Roman liturgy,—the confession, the consecration of the elements, the elevation of the host, the reservation of the cup for the clergy, etc. On January 20, 1522, he married in a most ostentatious way. The destruction of images, the abolition of monasteries, and other sweeping reforms, were in preparation. Meanwhile the students and the mob bombarded the house of the canons with stones, and interrupted the service when it was not in accordance with the latest frenzy; and the whole community was on the verge of chaos and anarchy. Luther's reappearance in the city (March 6, 1522) brought back order and quiet; and all the rash and premature reforms were set aside. Carlstadt himself was treated with leniency, even with regard, by Luther; but he felt sick and humiliated.[13]

We need not follow Carlstadt further throughout his tempestuous career, but he was a thorn in the very flesh of Luther, whose hand he was forcing. Luther had caused a little trickle in the dam of religious unrest, but Carlstadt, he perceived, was bent on tearing out whole sections, thus causing an inundation, a proceeding for which the arch-reformer was not at all prepared. So he wrote to Spalatin, his confidant in all his difficulties, and said:

> Pray for me, I beg, and be pleased to trample under foot this Satan at Wittemberg who has stood up against the Gospel in the name of the Gospel. We are now fighting with that angel who was turned into an angel of light. It will be difficult for Carlstadt to yield up his opinion; but Christ will compel him, if he does not yield of his own accord.[14]

And again a week later he writes to Wencelaus Link:

> Satan has made an irruption into this sheepfold of mine, and has found out how to change the freedom of the spirit into an occasion of the flesh, and to throw everything into confusion by means of the most pertinacious schisms, having thrown aside all service of love. Carlstadt and Gabriel are the authors of these monstrous goings-on.[15]

Luther deemed he had a mission from God to reform the Church, and was surprised that others imagined themselves inspired to do the same thing. This gave him food for reflection, but not for long. He was too much occupied with Carlstadt and other disturbing elements to pay much attention to Erasmus. The latter was perturbed, to put it mildly, when he saw the monks and nuns throughout Germany rushing forth from their monasteries, forsaking their vows, and in many

[13] Schaff-Herzog, *Encyclopaedia of Religious Knowledge,* Vol. I, *in loco.* N. Y., 1882.
[14] De Wette, *op. cit.,* Vol. II, p. 150.
[15] *Ibid.,* Vol. II, p. 156.

instances entering the bonds of matrimony. He hardly knew what to think about this himself, but was being importuned to express himself on the subject and called timid for not so doing by the Lutherans. This exasperated him, and he answered angrily:

> . . . What I may do for the Gospel is nobody's business. Men who rush rashly into every crime pretend that I am timid. But if my conscience would let me, or if I could see any benefit resulting to the Gospel, they would not find me timid. It is a wonderful result of the Gospel that the images are banished from one town; but oh, that they would banish from their hearts their most monstrous idols which are so much more evident in those who boast of being followers of Luther!
>
> In olden days those who had wives forsook them freely out of love for the Gospel; now, forsooth, the Gospel is flourishing if a few men marry wives with a handsome dowry. I do not say this to censure absolutely the marrying of priests, provided it be done either from necessity, or with the consent of superiors, or without disturbance, and with a sincere heart. Now, I am afraid that many marry for no other reason than that it is contrary to the rules of their superiors. I know how impure is the celibacy of some of them. But does the marrying of a wife insure chastity? What if a priest, who previously had a concubine, now has both a wife and a mistress? And yet to all Papists, for thus they [the Lutherans] style them, I have always declared that marriage should not be forbidden to those priests who are to be ordained hereafter, if they cannot remain continent; nor would I say anything else were I arguing the matter with the Sovereign Pontiff, not that I do not prefer continence, but that I see very few who practise it. But, meanwhile, what is the need of such a multitude of priests? I never advised any of them to marry, neither did I manifest dislike to one wishing to marry.
>
> If a monk will lay aside all his malice with his cowl, I shall not object to his throwing it off whenever he wishes. Now everywhere they are throwing them off rashly without any permission from their superiors, and from bad monks they become worse laymen. Nor does this changing of costume bring about anything else except the doing with more impunity whatever pleases their wishes. There are some, I admit, whose cowl hampers characters born for better things. There are others again that are born with such a disposition that they should be restrained by ten cowls rather than be left to their own sweet will. Certainly, the cowl has fed many who are now exposed to the danger of learning from a compelling poverty to make free with what does not belong to them. But what do you say of those in advanced years who, in spite of the entreaties of friends, knowingly, willingly, and with their eyes open, have betaken themselves to the cowl? Let such be ashamed of their fickleness, at least. At present they are boasting of it as something wonderful, and draw others after them by their exam-

ple. But of these on another occasion. Farewell in Christ. Basle, 1524.[16]

This is an important letter, for in it Erasmus comes out flatly for the marriage of priests. Luther prescribed marriage for priests on the ground that celibacy was against divine law. Erasmus, on the other hand, would allow them to marry from his favorite doctrine of expediency. He seems to have believed in the modern doctrine that few men, even though priests, can be continent, and consequently advises marriage for them if they so desire. The Catholic Church has proved that he was wrong, for she still insists on continence in her clergy, and the few lapses in her ranks in this regard show that it is possible. It is only a matter of discipline, however, and not of dogma; and that is surely within her own province.

[16] Eras. Ep. 1459, l. 79 *ad fin.*

CHAPTER XVI

"DE LIBERO ARBITRIO": EFFECT ON ERASMUS' POSITION; EFFECT ON LUTHER

But all this time, for no particular reason that is evident, Erasmus still hesitated to launch against Luther his much heralded work, *On Freewill.* It was perhaps due to the fact that he very much wanted to make it unanswerable that he took so much time on it. He knew that Luther not only considered him no great theologian but even took no pains to hide his opinion on the matter, as we learn from a letter of Luther to Oecolampadius, who was then working on a commentary on the Prophet Isaiah:

> . . . May the Lord strengthen you in your undertaking, the exposition of Isaiah, although I hear by letter that Erasmus takes no pleasure therein. But do not let his displeasure disturb you. . . . He has performed the task to which he was called: he has reinstated the ancient languages, and recalled them from pagan studies. Perhaps he, like Moses, will die in the land of Moab, for he is powerless to guide men to those higher studies which lead to divine blessedness. I should very much like him to cease expounding the Scriptures, for he is not equal to the task. . . . He has done enough in exposing the evil, but he cannot show forth the good (as I see it) or point the way to the promised land.[1]

This piqued the pride of Erasmus,[2] and he decided that, when he did enter the lists against Luther, the latter should be compelled to revise his opinion, if not on Freewill, then at least on Erasmus' theological abilities. So he resolved to take his own time in the writing of his work and to do it exceedingly well. But there was one man in Germany who did not enjoy this delay, who was tired of such dilatory tactics and did not hesitate to say so. This was Duke George, ruler of that part of Saxony which was not subject to the sway of his cousin Elector Frederick, Luther's protector. Erasmus had always desired the good opinion of Duke George, who on his side much admired the great writer and had long looked to him to defend the Church against Luther. But he had at length lost patience with him and wrote him a stinging letter of reproach for his remissness. In this letter, dated from Dresden, May 21, 1524, he told Erasmus what he thought of him, and said that it was much to be wished that God had put it into his head three years ago to separate himself from Luther's faction, and to show by some work of his that he had nothing in common with Luther. He pointed out how easy it would have been at that time to have quenched the flame that had since caused this great conflagration:

[1] De Wette, *op. cit.,* Vol. II, pp. 352-3.

[2] See Eras. Ep. 1384, ll. 51 *sqq.*

To tell you what I think [said the Duke], it was your fault; for if, while there was still time and the evil had not become so firmly rooted, you had taken the same resolution to attack Luther that you have now taken, . . . we should not be where we are at present. But because up to this you have not declared open war against him, but have been satisfied to attack him secretly, gently, and as if you did not wish to do him much harm, there have been varying opinions about you. Some have thought that you were really an enemy of Luther; others imagined that you had an understanding with him, although you would have the world believe otherwise.[8]

Although he did not receive this letter previous to his launching his *De libero arbitrio,* he knew from many sources the Duke's bitter feeling towards him, and although, too, the following letter is not an answer to the one just given, it will serve to show how hard it was for Erasmus to bring himself to the task of writing against Luther:

Most illustrious Prince. That hitherto I have not obeyed the exhortations of your Highness arose from many reasons, but from two in particular. First, because I felt that on account of my years and disposition I was unequal to such a very risky business, and secondly, because, from some strange trait of my nature, I have always shrunk from gladiatorial contests of this nature. For what is accomplished by the screeds which are now flying around everywhere, other than what is usually done in the gladiatorial arena? Moreover, whatever Luther's doctrine may be, I have always regarded himself as a necessary evil in these universally corrupt phases of the Church's condition; and I was in hopes that from him, as from a somewhat bitter and violent remedy, something of health-giving efficacy might be developed in the body of Christian people. But now, since I find that many take my moderation for a collusion with Luther, with whom I have never had any private understanding; and since I see that under the pretext of the Gospel there is being brought forth a new sort of characters who are shameless, insolent, and ungovernable, who, in a word, are such that not even Luther himself can endure them; and yet with the same recklessness with which they contemn bishops and rulers, they contemn even Luther himself; I enter the arena at almost the same age at which Publius the actor entered on the stage; and how happy the issue of it is to be, I know not, though I certainly trust that it may be profitable and beneficial to the republic of Christ.

I am sending to your Majesty my book *On Freewill,* concerning which I saw your most erudite epistle some time ago. I have been spurred on in this matter by the letter of his Serene Majesty of England, and by that of Clement VII, but far more forcibly by the wickedness of some of those brawlers, who will destroy the Gospel and learning together unless they are restrained. I desired the tyranny of the Pharisees to be destroyed, not changed; but, if it is to be preserved, I would prefer the Popes and bishops just as

[8] *Ibid.,* 1448, ll. 39-50.

they are, rather than some of those sordid Phalarises who are the most intolerable of all. I await the judgment of your Highness, for whom I desire every good. Basle, September 6, 1524.[4]

So the long awaited work *On Freewill* was formally launched on the world in September of this year; and he awaited—with what anxiety and patience we may readily imagine—the verdict of the world at large. He sent copies of it to King Henry VIII, to Fisher, to Tunstall, and to Wolsey, as also probably to More and others. To King Henry he wrote:

Most illustrious King. I was not ignorant how unfit I was for the gladiatorial arena, having spent all my life in the garden of the Muses. But what would I not dare under the auspices of your most gracious Majesty? The die is cast, for my book *On Freewill* has gone forth; a bold stroke, believe me, as things now are in Germany. I expect to be stoned, and already a few rabid pamphlets are winged at my head. But I am consoling myself with the example of your Majesty, since not even you were spared by their savagery. I had decided to go further along the lines you had suggested in your letter, and to devote the rest of my life to helping the Christian religion; but I will do this with more alacrity after your Majesty has deigned to spur me still further on with a sign of your approval; to whom I wish perpetual felicity. Basle, September 6, 1524.[5]

The book seems to have reinstated him somewhat in the affections of his English friends, some of them, notably Wolsey, having sent him presents of money to show their satisfaction. It was a most effectual silencer of hostile tongues, and, for the time being, he regained his lost popularity, and even increased it. Some of this was due to the fact that Luther did not immediately reply, thus exciting in some the hope that the work of Erasmus was unanswerable. But, as we have seen, it came at a time when Luther was exceedingly occupied, and we know that he did not have the least idea of allowing it to pass unanswered. Writing to Spalatin two months after the appearance of Erasmus' work, he says: "It is incredible how I loathe that pamphlet on Freewill, although as yet I have only read about two chapters of it. It is unpleasant to have to reply to such a learned book of so erudite a man."[6] And two weeks afterwards he informs Nicholas Hausmann, "I will reply to Erasmus, not on his account, but on account of those who make use of his authority for their own glory as against Christ."[7] Later, in the following January, he tells Nicholas Amsdorf, "I will not reply to Erasmus yet until I have finished with Carlstadt, who has stirred up, and is still stirring up, great disturbances in upper Germany."[8] In the succeeding month he had not yet found time to do so, as he again tells Spalatin that "Erasmus shall be answered when

[4] *Ibid.*, 1495.
[5] *Ibid.*, 1493.
[6] De Wette, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 561.
[7] *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 562.
[8] *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 616.

I have a little time." [9] And so the matter drifted along from week to week, finding him ever immersed in settling the affairs of his new church, of which he was the authoritative pope. Hausmann seems to have been urging him to answer Erasmus, as we note in a second letter to this correspondent the remark, "I ought to reply to the *Freewill,* but being overwhelmed by the needs of the compositors, I am compelled to defer it." [10] If we were writing the life of Luther, we could give many reasons for the delay in answering Erasmus; for, besides his troubles with Carlstadt, he was confronted with worse ones by Münzer, Leo Jude, Oecolampadius, Zwingli, and others, who felt that they had as much right to decide on the doctrines of the new church as Luther had. Besides this, he had multifarious duties connected with the emptying of the convents and monasteries, settling pastors over churches, arranging the form of service to be followed in this new dispensation of things, and incidentally getting himself married. So it was not until the latter part of 1525 that he eventually issued his work, which, in antithesis to Erasmus' *Freewill,* he entitled *The Enslaved Will.* Since we make no pretension to profound theological learning, we shall not attempt to judge of the merits of either principal in this discussion, contenting ourselves with presenting the substance of what each maintained.

Erasmus adopted a lofty tone, and maintained it consistently throughout his work. He was exceedingly courteous to Luther, and manifested a disposition to propitiate him and at the same time to win him back to orthodox methods of thinking. In fact, we have nothing but praise for the manner in which he went about his task. He started off by saying that his intention was not to dogmatize, but to elicit the truth. He then, like a good scholastic, defines his terms, by showing what he understands by Freewill as opposed to its contrary. He then proves that almost all the fathers of the Church recognized the freedom of the will, and instances especially Origen, Tertullian, Basil, Chrysostom, Cyril, John Damascene, Cyprian, Hilary, Ambrose, Jerome, and Augustine, and to these he adds the Schoolmen, such as St. Thomas, Scotus, Durandus, and others, including with them the Popes and Councils together with the faculties of theology in all the universities. Then he very candidly admits:

> I confess that it is right that the authority of Holy Writ of itself shall weigh more than all the opinions of the whole of mankind. But this is not a controversy about the Scriptures. Both of us receive and venerate the selfsame Scriptures, but the trouble is about the sense of the Scriptures. . . . [Whose interpretation shall we take? Someone may say,] "What is the need of an interpreter when the Scripture is so plain?" But, if it is so plain, why have so many excellent men groped blindly for so many centuries, and this in a matter so important that they themselves earnestly desire it to seem clear? If the Scriptures contain nothing obscure, what need was there for prophecy in the times of the Apostles? They

[9] *Ibid.,* Vol. II, p. 626.

[10] *Ibid.,* Vol. II, p. 635.

> exclaim that this was the gift of the Holy Ghost. . . . Well, then, to whom did this gift pass after the death of the Apostles? If it passed to everybody, then every interpretation of ours is uncertain, [since we do not agree]. If it passed to nobody, then every interpretation of ours is uncertain to-day when so many obscurities are puzzling the erudite. If it passed to those who succeeded the Apostles, then someone may cry out that for many centuries the successors of the Apostles had not the Apostolic spirit. And yet of these men we may assume very probably, other things being equal, that God infused His spirit into them when He gave them their mission, just as we believe it more probable that He gave grace to the one who was baptized than to the one who was not baptized." [11]

Thus Erasmus goes on to show that the Church was naturally the tribunal for the interpretation of the Scriptures, a function which Luther denied, but which he afterwards found necessary to usurp to himself as against Carlstadt, Munzer, and the other reformers. Erasmus asserts it to be undeniable that there are many passages in Holy Writ which plainly establish freewill. On the other hand, he admits there are several which seem to annihilate it totally.

> But [he says] Holy Writ cannot be at variance with itself, since all of it proceeds from the same spirit. . . . Now I understand freewill to be that quality of the human will by which a man is able to apply himself to those things which lead to eternal salvation or to turn away from them. . . . Ecclesiasticus, chap. xv, says: "God made man from the beginning, and left him in the hand of his own counsel. He added His commandments and precepts. If thou wilt keep the commandments and perform acceptable fidelity for ever, they shall preserve thee. He hath set water and fire before thee; stretch forth thy hand to which thou wilt. Before man is life and death, good and evil; that which he shall choose shall be given him."[12]

Then Erasmus adduces numerous passages, all going to corroborate this same scriptural assertion of the absolute freedom of the will; and, after doing this very thoroughly, very skilfully, and very learnedly, he passes on to consider the few passages that seem to make against freedom of the will. These are principally the two which St. Paul treats of, the one taken from Exodus, chap. ix, where God hardened the heart of Pharaoh, and the other from Malachias i. As both these passages are explained by St. Paul, in his Epistle to the Romans ix, we need not go into them here any further than to record Erasmus' conclusions therefrom:

> Since it seems absurd that God, who is not only just but good, is said to harden the heart of man so that by the latter's malice He might illustrate His power, Origen, in his third book, Περὶ ἀρχῶν, thus explains the difficulty; that while he admits the occasion of the

[11] *De libero arbitrio,* LB Vol IX, col. 1219B-D. [12] *Ibid.,* col. 1220F-1221A.

hardening of Pharaoh's heart is due to God, yet he charges the blame therefor on Pharaoh, who by his malice is made the more obstinate by those very things by which he ought to be led to repent, just as from the same showers of rain the cultivated field produces delectable fruit, while the uncultivated field produces thorns and thistles.[18]

Erasmus concludes as follows:

I am pleased with the opinion of those who contribute something to freewill, but very much more to grace. You must not avoid the Scylla of arrogance in such a way that you may be cast on the Charybdis of despair and inaction. . . .

"Why," you may say, "should anything be granted to freewill?" That there may be something which may deservedly be charged to the wicked who have willingly failed to respond to the grace of God; that the calumnious charge of cruelty and injustice on the part of God may be removed; that despair on our part may be avoided; that excessive security may be shunned; and that we may be stimulated to endeavor. For these causes freewill has been laid down as a dogma by almost all men, but of no avail without the grace of God, lest we might arrogate anything to ourselves. But some one may say, "Of what avail is freewill if it works nothing?" I reply, of what avail is man at all, if God works in him just as the potter in his clay, and just as He would in a stone? Now, if this matter has been sufficiently demonstrated to be such that it is not expedient, as far as piety is concerned, to scrutinize it too closely, especially among the uneducated; if I have shown that this opinion is based on more numerous and more evident passages of Scripture than the other; if it is plain that Holy Writ is in many passages obscure and figurative, or even at first glance seems to be in disagreement with itself and that, on that account, whether we wish it or not, we must depart from it verbally and literally somewhat, and must modify the sense by interpretation; and if finally there is set forth the many inconveniences, I will not say absurdities, which would follow if freewill were once entirely taken away, and if it were openly brought to pass, by the accepting of this judgment of which I have spoken, that nothing of those things would perish of which Luther piously and in a Christian manner has discussed—about supreme love for God, about abolishing trust in our merits, our works, our endeavors, and about transferring such to God and His promises—I would now desire the reader to weigh this and say whether he would think it just to condemn this judgment of so many of the Doctors of the Church which the consent of so many ages and peoples has approved, and to take in its place certain erroneous opinions on account of which the Christian world is now convulsed? If these latter are true, I candidly confess the dullness of my mind in not being able to understand them. Of a certainty I will not knowingly resist the truth; I sincerely favor

[18] *Ibid.*, col. 1230C.

> the freedom which is truly of the Gospel, and I detest whatever is opposed to the Gospel. I do not herein play the part of a judge, as I have already said, but of one who would thresh out the matter thoroughly; and yet I am truly able to affirm this, that in discussing this matter I have preserved that religious point of view which was in the olden days demanded of the judges appointed for the consideration of these capital cases. Old a man as I am, it will not shame me or be irksome to learn from a young man, provided he teaches me what is more satisfactory to my judgment, and does it with the gentleness of the Gospel. Here I am sure someone will say, "Let Erasmus learn to know Christ and be strong; let him dismiss his human prudence, for no one understands such things as these who has not the Spirit of God." If I do not yet understand what Christ is, I have hitherto certainly wandered far afield; still I would surely like to learn what spirit has guided so many Doctors and Christian people; for it is probable that the people understood what the bishops, who do not understand this new doctrine, used to teach them for now nearly thirteen centuries. I have finished: let others judge.[14]

This presentation of his case commends itself to us at least by its fairness and candor. Our limitations of space and our lack of capacity in matters theological prevent us from giving more than the barest outline of the arguments advanced on either side. Much as Luther had ridiculed the pretensions of Erasmus to be a theologian, he approached the subject of his reply with measured slowness, which was in strong contrast with his usual method of procedure in similar cases. He recognized the ability and standing of his opponent, and almost his first sentence was one of commendation. He perceived that Erasmus had gone to the root of things in his choice of a subject for discussion, for on the question of freewill or its antithesis depended the entire structure of Christian belief. So he congratulated him in not bringing about a discussion on minor matters, such as *indulgences,* confession, purgatory, or the papacy, all of which subjects would stand or fall according as freewill or its absence prevailed. Having made these concessions to courtesy, he then proceeds to become somewhat sarcastic as follows:

> Someone may wonder perhaps at this new and unwonted toleration, or I might even say trepidation, on the part of Luther, whom the many boastful expressions and letters of exultation on the part of his adversaries have failed to excite, congratulating Erasmus on his victory as they do, and chanting paeans of joy because, forsooth, this Maccabeus, this most stubborn assertor, has at length found a worthy antagonist, against whom he does not dare to open his mouth. But not only do I not blame those people, but I myself yield you the palm, something which hitherto I have done for nobody. And this because you far and away surpass me in power of mind and expression which we all deservedly grant you, the

[14] *Ibid.,* col. 1247D *ad fin.*

more since I am a barbarian and never was anything else, but also because you have hindered my spirit and impetuosity, and have left me languid before the fight, and this for two reasons. First, by the artful way in which you have, with your wonderful and constant modesty, so argued your cause, that you have prevented me from becoming angry with you; and, secondly, because by some fortune, chance, or fate, it happens that on so great a subject you say nothing that has not been already said, and so little do you say, and so much do you attribute to *free will,* more than the sophists themselves have hitherto said and attributed, about which I will speak later, that it would seem to be quite useless to reply to those arguments of yours which have been so often refuted by myself, but which have been entirely trampled on and ground under foot by Philip Melancthon's invincible little work *De locis theologicis,* a work in my opinion worthy not only of immortality, but also of recognition by Church canon, in comparison with which your pamphlet is so paltry and worthless that I feel extremely sorry to see you polluting your most beautiful and ingenious style of writing with such rubbish; and I am indignant that such particularly unworthy material should be dressed up in the rich ornaments of your eloquence, as if offal or manure were to be carried in gold and silver vases. . . . Nothing satisfactory can be said or written on such matters, even by means of many thousands of books many times repeated, for it is just like plowing the seashore and planting seeds therein, or filling a sieve with water. . . . So that my impulse to reply was hindered neither by the multitude of my duties, the difficulty of the undertaking, the greatness of your eloquence, or any fear of you, but by mere weariness, indignation, and contempt, in a word, my opinion of your diatribe; not to mention, at the same time, that you still pertinaciously keep up your old custom of being like yourself, always slippery and ambiguous, while with a caution greater than that of Ulysses you seem to sail between Scylla and Charybdis, ever asserting nothing, though always seeming to assert it. With such a class of men, I ask, what can be discussed or settled, unless one has the dexterity to capture a Proteus?[15]

This was the tone Luther chose to adopt towards an antagonist whose personality merited better treatment; choosing to disregard the vastness of the question, the immensity of the issues involved, and the necessity of treating his opponent with the respect that the matter under discussion deserved. His friend Melancthon was an entirely different character, who did not hesitate to say to Erasmus on the publication of his *Freewill,* "It has been well received here, and it would be a tyranny to prevent anyone from expressing in the Church the sentiments which he holds on religion. Such expression should be quite free to all, provided that they do not mingle therein human motives."[16] Melancthon had promised on Luther's part that the latter

[15] Luther, *De seruo arbitrio, ab initio.*

[16] Eras. Ep. 1500.

would be just as considerate and courteous as Erasmus; but it was really not in Luther's nature to be moderate in anything. In all his controversies, but especially in this one, he gave free rein to his fury and violence, and there was scarcely any species of abuse permissible in discussion that he did not employ. As like begets like, Erasmus immediately laid aside his mildness of tone, and gave Luther back his insults with accrued interest. He declared that Luther had complimented him in the beginning of his reply only to abuse him more roundly in the sequence, that his tone was outrageous and his malice patent to everyone. He declared that he had tried to treat the subject in entire honesty of spirit, but that Luther had filled his pamphlet with savage insults which bore not the slightest relation to the matter under discussion, and particularly complained that he had called him an atheist, an Epicurean, a follower of Pyrrhus, and a blasphemer, and that a third of his book consisted of similar abuse. When Erasmus had once let go of himself he could rail just as well as Luther. He called the latter arrogant, seditious, and headstrong, and asserted that he had injured the cause of learning, excited the wicked to riot and revolution, and set the world by the ears. "I could have wished for you a better spirit," he wrote to Luther, "if you were not so content with the one you have. You can wish any sort of spirit you like for me, provided that it is not your own, or unless the Lord should change it." [17] So the controversy ended as do all such religious controversies where the personal equation is involved, leaving the parties further apart and more bitterly opposed to each other than ever before.

Luther's position has been so often described in this matter of freewill that the reader will perhaps deem further disquisition on the matter unnecessary. But we do not wish to lay ourselves open to any charge of unfairness and will give as much of Luther's doctrine as we have of that of Erasmus. The fundamental basis of Luther's teaching was that God knows all things and has predestined all things. Hence those who are lost are lost in conformity with His predestination. Luther entirely scouted all idea of such a thing as freewill in man, insisting that he was governed in his acts by unavoidable necessity. He took the passages that Erasmus had quoted against him, as for instance Josue xxiv. 15—"But if it seem evil to you to serve the Lord, you have your choice: choose this day that which pleaseth you, whom you would rather serve," etc.—and said that they only meant that man would and did rely on his own natural strength to do God's will, but that it was a vain thing in any case. He insisted that the word "choose" assumes the assistance of God's help, without which man cannot perform what God requires of him. Hence Luther made the will of man entirely passive in the matter of salvation and damnation, leaving him subject to the fixed laws of necessity. To the objection of Erasmus that God is able to, and yet does not, change the will of the wicked, Luther answered, what God does is right, and his motives are unquestionable. And he further maintained that this is the very highest sort of faith, that God who is so clement saves so few, and that He is just

[17] Erasmus, *Hyperaspistes, in loco.*

who makes us deserving of damnation of His own will.[18] Then he goes on to say:

> The advocates of freewill have no other way of answering the question, How does God justify one man and not another? other than by having recourse to the different use that each will make of his freewill, the one exerting himself, while the other makes no effort, and that God approves the former on account of his exertions and punishes the latter for omitting them.[19]

Luther does not answer the question either, but objects to the Catholic standpoint that it would make God a respecter of works, merits, and of persons.[20] He strenuously asserted, in opposition to Erasmus, that God alone had freewill, and that man's will is subject to His in everything. Harsh as this doctrine was, he maintained it stubbornly in spite of the protests, not only of Catholics, but even of some of his own partisans. To these latter his only reply was, not to scrutinize too closely the motives of God but to trust in the Scriptures.

As we have said, Erasmus was so offended at the savage manner in which Luther had treated him in his *De seruo arbitrio* that he immediately set himself about getting out a reply, which was issued in the latter part of 1526 with the title of *Hyperaspistes,* a defense of his own *De libero arbitrio.* Since he had been suspected by the ultra-Catholic party of being in some sort of collusion with Luther on account of the measured and moderate tone he had assumed towards him, he took occasion to remark, in the opening of his *Hyperaspistes,* that they would certainly see reason to rid themselves of that erroneous impression when they had perused his present work. Thereupon he launched forth into invective and denunciation, satire and ridicule, sarcasm and derision, sparing no artifice of language to cover Luther with obloquy and confusion. He laughs to scorn Luther's attempts to disprove the arguments brought forward to defend the doctrine of freewill, and he expresses pleasure that finally all Catholics will see once for all how widely apart they are in their respective beliefs, and especially how false it is that he Erasmus had the slightest leaning toward Luther's teachings either now or at any time in the past. Never had he hitherto permitted himself such license of speech since his early days in Paris, when he had drawn for Thomas Grey the caricature of the Scotchman mentioned in Chapter VI of the first volume. Melancthon was overwhelmed with grief at seeing two of his dearest friends thus flying at each other's throat. He unburdened himself on the subject to Camerarius, saying: "Have you ever seen a work more violent than that of Erasmus? It is really serpent-like." And to Erasmus himself he could not refrain from saying:

> Would to God that there might be no such violent dispute between you. It is true that Luther has not used discretion towards you,

[18] "Sua voluntate nos damnabiles facti." (See *De seruo arbitrio* in *Lutheri opera latina . . . ad reformationis historiam . . . pertinentia,* Vol. VII, p. 154.

[19] *Ibid.,* p. 341.

[20] *Ibid.,* p. 342.

> but it is also true that you have handled him cruelly. I believe him to be a better man than he seems to one who judges him by his violent writings. Both your efforts and his would be more useful to the Church were you to join in remedying the troubles she is experiencing.[21]

Justus Jonas had been very much displeased with Luther's harshness towards Erasmus as expressed in the *De seruo arbitrio;* but when he read Erasmus' *Hyperaspistes* he was silenced, and could not resent Luther's remark, "Now you know your Erasmus at last, . . . whose praises you sang so often; and you can readily see that he was but a viper filled with deadly poison." [22] The *Hyperaspistes* was published in two parts, of which the second appeared in November, 1527. It was no less virulent than the first. To be entirely fair in the matter, we have to allow that the *De libero arbitrio* of Erasmus did accomplish something. It restrained the multitude from throwing off all religious allegiance and giving free rein to their passions; it kept many of the best humanists from openly espousing the teachings of Luther; and it must have considerably modified the belief of Melancthon, and even of Luther himself, since we find that the latter consented to the insertion in the *Apology of the Augsburg Confession* of a paragraph to the effect that "We must recognize the freedom of the will in all men who have the use of reason." [23] The number of Luther's followers appreciably diminished, as we learn from the letter of congratulation which the Emperor Charles sent to Erasmus, in which he insisted that Erasmus alone had done more than the Popes, the kings, and the universities together; and expressed the fervent wish that his name would be immortal here, and that he would reap an eternal reward for his efforts in the world to come.[24]

In replying to this letter of the Emperor, Erasmus recognizes the results of his work in diminishing the number of Luther's adherents, and takes a not unnatural pride in the fact. He also mentions it in a letter to the Imperial Chancellor Mercurino Gattinara, where he says: "The Lutheran fever is decreasing day by day, so much so that Luther himself is writing recantations on almost every one of his doctrines, and by others he is held for this reason to be a heretic and a madman."[25] As a result of all this laudation he began to recover his gayety, and to exercise the spirit of raillery that had entirely deserted him during this time of trial.

Meanwhile Luther's hatred of him became deadly, for he recognized that Erasmus was the only man who could paralyze his arm. Some of his utterances against our subject have the appearance of hysterics or the ravings of a fevered patient. He could not sufficiently express

[21] Eras. Ep. (LB) col. 1072B-C.
[22] De Wette, *op. cit.*, Vol. III, p. 212.
[23] *Repetitio confessionis augustanæ,* col. 392-3 in Vol. XXVIII *Corpus reformatorum.* Brunswick, 1860.
[24] Eras. Ep. (LB) col. 1047.
[25] *Ibid.,* col. 1091A. (Seckendorf hazards the opinion that these others were Zwingli or the Anabaptists.)

his execration and venom in words. "That irritated viper, Erasmus of Rotterdam, is writing against me again!" he exclaims in one place.[26] His Table-Talk is full of such rancorous utterances as the following, which will serve to show his feelings toward Erasmus from this time on:

> Shame upon thee, accursed wretch! . . . He is a mere Momus, making his mows and mocks at everything and everybody, at God and man, at papist and protestant, but all the while using such shuffling and double-meaning terms, that no one can lay hold of him to any effectual purpose. Whenever I pray, I pray for a curse upon Erasmus.[27]

In his course of instructions to his children and to all Evangelical Christians for 1533, he served up to them this rather highly seasoned morsel:

> Erasmus, an enemy of all religions, and an especial opponent of Christ, a perfect example and copy of Epicurus and Lucian. I, Martin Luther, write this with my own hand to my dearest son John, and through thee to all the children of the Holy Church of Christ.[28]

[26] De Wette, *op. cit.*, Vol. III, p. 98.
[27] Luther's *Table-Talk*, p. 283, Hazlitt's translation. London, 1887.
[28] De Wette, Vol. IV, p. 497.

CHAPTER XVII

CONTROVERSY WITH BEDDA

It seemed that there was to be no peace for Erasmus, as we shall here have to notice the attacks of two critics of his own side, the Prince of Carpi, an Italian, and Natalis Bedda, a Frenchman. Alberto Pio, Prince of Carpi, had been driven by political troubles to take up his residence in Rome, where he was held in the highest consideration by Popes, Cardinals, and other men of rank in the Eternal City. He became much interested in matters theological, probably on account of the world-wide disturbances in religious thought produced by Luther. The results of his studies, as much as his environment, perhaps, had made him hostile to Luther. He appears to have watched the conduct and writings of Erasmus very closely, being probably drawn thereto by the expressed sentiments of Stunica, who was also in Rome at that time and, as we have already related, was attacking Erasmus unsparingly. Having made his own observations and having therefrom deduced conclusions which were more or less correct, Prince Alberto felt compelled to accuse Erasmus of being in some measure to blame for the encouragement he had formerly given Luther. Since by his rank and standing at Rome he was in a position to do Erasmus great harm in the estimation of the Roman ecclesiastical authorities, Erasmus felt that he must set himself right before the Curia, and took the resolution of writing to the Prince and expostulating with him. He began by saying that the Prince was perhaps right in telling the Cardinals that Erasmus had no great knowledge of the sciences and was little versed in philosophy and theology, and that he was not much grieved by that. But he was very much grieved to hear that the Prince had been circulating a report that he Erasmus was the man responsible for all the troubles with which the Church was at that moment contending. He insisted that, on the contrary, he was the very first person to warn his own friends not to take part in Luther's movement, to which he could foresee only one end, and that a calamitous one. He went on to declare that while many were applauding Luther he himself had stood apart and, from fear that the matter would end in tumult, had counseled the printer Froben not to publish any of Luther's writings. In addition to this, he had sacrificed many friendships among the Germans because of his pronounced opposition to Luther and his firm determination not to be drawn over to his party. Then, with a little perhaps pardonable vanity, he informed the Prince that, had he indeed decided to throw in his lot with Luther, the world would have soon regretted the results of his weighty influence, but that he had resolved never to do anything which would be detrimental to the true interests of the

Roman Church. As for the charge that Luther had drawn much of his teachings from the writings of Erasmus, he replied that no one held those writings in greater contempt than Luther himself, who openly charged that he Erasmus was no theologian. It was true, he said, that he had not written against Luther in the beginning, but at that time he had considered Luther a good man, selected by Heaven to assist in reforming the morals of the clergy, but that he had since found Luther's own methods worthy of reprehension. Then he gave it as his opinion that the unregulated lives of some ecclesiastics, the arrogance of some theologians, and the insupportable tyranny of some monks, were really the primal cause of the present turmoil. It was a well-written *Apologia,* but it did not seem to convince the Prince of Carpi in the slightest degree. However, the Prince hastened to give an example of what the world expected of Erasmus by hastening himself to break a lance with Luther. This he did by issuing against him a work of considerable merit and no mean ability. To this book he prefixed a preface in which he assumed that Erasmus entertained the same sentiments as Luther, and sent Erasmus a copy. This was hardly fair to Erasmus, who was certainly not deserving of being thus pilloried, but whose delay in stating his position had caused his sentiments to be misunderstood, to his great detriment. In his reply to the Prince he wrote in terms of deference and respect, assuring him that he was mistaken in thinking of him as he did and protesting that, if they could only have a meeting, the Prince would willingly change his opinion. But the latter, doubting the sincerity of Erasmus, refused to be mollified, and set himself to the task of pointing out the errors which he found in his various works. He died before this book was published. After his death, however, it was issued by some of his friends, notably the Spanish scholar Sepulveda, by Floridus Sabinus, and by a monk named Peter of the Franciscan Order. Then Erasmus opened the floodgates of his wrath and assailed the Prince's work savagely, urged all the more furiously thereto by hearing that some of the Franciscans had aided in it. He called him senile, moribund, and destined to fill a monk's cowl, and excelled himself in vituperation.[1] He sought sympathy from his friends in this new attack, but did not always get it. He complained to his quondam Ferrara acquaintance, Celio Calcagnini, of the treatment the Prince of Carpi had meted out to him, belittling him where he could. But Calcagnini knew the Prince better than Erasmus did, and would not have it so. So he replied to Erasmus' letter in the following terms, which were meant to soothe the great man's wounded vanity and, at the same time, to defend his other friend:

> What you told me about Pio di Carpi was not less unpleasant than unexpected. There has been a long friendship subsisting between us ever since he was a young man and I was no more than a boy, at which period we were attending the lectures of the cele-

[1] Jortin, who had a fund of dry humor, said of this reply of Erasmus that it was "full of spirit, and indeed he always shines in his apologies for himself, being animated with the subject." (*Erasmus,* Vol. I, p. 358.)

brated Mantuan professor of philosophy Petreto, who was just then giving a course in Dialectics. Than this prince I never knew anyone more refined or gentle; and so far was it from his disposition to detract from anyone's deserving, that the good fellow very often attached himself to those who were most unlike himself, that is, to the undeserving. On this account I cannot help deeming it strange in him that he could have so far degenerated in character as to have inveighed so harshly and unjustly against you; for anyone who loves you not either is jealous of you, or does not know what merits love. And though I build as much on your uprightness as on your prudence, yet my earnest affection for you makes me advise and admonish you not to lend your ears too easily to whisperers and tale-bearers, whom you encourage if you do not chastise, as Domitian once truly said.[2]

But so far was Erasmus from becoming soothed by the philosophic advice of Calcagnini that he set himself to pillory the Prince of Carpi in one of his most mordant *Colloquies,* where, under the name of Eusebius, which in Greek means the same as Pio in Italian, he describes his death and funeral services.[3] So the Prince of Carpi, having escaped the wrath of Erasmus by dying, none the less was made to suffer posthumously by being placed in the *Colloquies* by the side of Andreas d'Asola and so many others, and there held up to the cutting, scornful, and merciless wit of a past master in that art. Montaigne says, "Wit is a dangerous weapon even to the possessor, if he know not how to use it discreetly."[4] And one cannot say that caricaturing one's enemies after their death is making a very discreet use of wit. In fact, one is almost forced to adopt the dictum that "Wit is the most rascally, contemptible, beggarly thing on the face of the earth."[5] He was not so much incensed with the Prince on account of what he said of him, as on account of its bringing about his loss of favor with Pope Clement; and he made a great effort to win back again the friendship of that Pontiff in a letter which he sent him from Basle, dated February 13, 1524. At this time, too, he fell into disfavor with the king of France, Francis I, which is not to be wondered at if we remember the events that had just occurred: the taking prisoner of Francis by the Emperor Charles, and the sacking of Rome itself. The two allies Clement and Francis could not readily forget that Erasmus was a pensioner of the hated Emperor who had so humiliated them, and that he himself was of the hated Germanic race. So the moment was not propitious for Erasmus to make much progress in the regard of the much harassed Pontiff, and his letter would seem to have remain unanswered.

With regard to the other opponent whom we have mentioned, Noel or Natalis Bedda, we are compelled to say considerable, both on account of his standing and for the consequences to Erasmus which followed this writer's charges. Many and violent as Erasmus' enemies were in the main, the dubious honor remains with Bedda of being the most

[2] Eras. Ep. 1587, ll. 229-42.
[3] See *Colloquia, Exequiæ seraphicæ.*
[4] *Essays,* Bk. II, chap. xii.
[5] Arthur Murphy, *The Apprentice.*

violent of them all. However, with all his faults, he was not at all the man that Drummond depicts for us when he states that he was "an ignorant and narrow-minded fanatic, wedded to scholasticism, a bitter enemy of all generous culture, a bigoted Catholic and a most determined heresy-hunter." [6] He was principal of the College of Montaigu, and one of the Doctors of the Sorbonne; this will perhaps be sufficient to give us an idea of his education and abilities, if we assume that he must have been in accord with the spirit of the latter institution. From the Schaff-Herzog *Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge* we learn what the theology of the Sorbonne really was:

> The general tendency of that theology was that which must underlie all true theology,—a perfect mediation between faith and knowledge, religion and science, theology and philosophy; but, in pursuing that tendency, the Sorbonne always kept its doctrines pure, that is, in harmony with the teachings of the church, though without submitting in a slavish manner to ecclesiastical misuses or sacerdotal eccentricities. It was the Sorbonne which drove the scandalous Feast of the Fools out of the church; and it was also the Sorbonne which successfully opposed the introduction of the Peter's-pence and of the Inquisition into France. Among its other merits may be also mentioned, that it established the first printing-press in Paris, 1470; and, as an indication of the high rank it held in the world's estimation, it may be added that it represented the university of Paris at the councils.[7]

We may safely assume then that Bedda was an ardent champion of the Church wherever it did not conflict with the political rights and privileges of the Gallican king and hierarchy, endowed with the same hatred of anything savoring of heresy as his contemporaries, and possibly more sincere than discreet at times. The same thing can be well predicated of Erasmus, Luther, and most of the prominent actors on the stage at that critical period. Now the Sorbonne was particularly watchful of everything appertaining to the purity and sanctity of religion in all its phases, and had been instrumental in having laws passed by the Parliament prohibiting the publication of anything having relation to faith or morals that had not first been passed upon by itself, or the entire theological faculty of the University. Hence, when Conrad Resch, a German bookseller, tried to have Erasmus' *Paraphrase on St. Luke* reissued at Paris, he had recourse to the good offices of Francis de Loin, a former president of the Senate but now a royal councilor and intimate friend of Erasmus, to obtain for him the necessary permission to print. De Loin, following the usual practice of the day, sent the *Paraphrase* to Bedda, who was a syndic, or one of those officials of the theological faculty to whom the examination of such works was generally committed. It may be that Erasmus' now dubious reputation for orthodoxy had preceded his work to Paris, and that Bedda scanned the *Paraphrase* most closely. Certain it is that, in his official report to De Loin, Bedda pointed out fifty propositions which were either

[6] *Erasmus,* Vol. II, p. 220. [7] See art. "Sorbonne."

clearly erroneous or at least suspicious. The bookseller, fearing that Bedda might have been actuated by motives that were subjective rather than objective, appealed from him to the Sorbonne sitting as a whole. This body appointed from its whole number commissioners who, having gone over the *Paraphrase* carefully, made their report to the faculty that there were many pernicious things in the work, and advised that permission to print be refused. Then this question was put to the Sorbonne categorically: "Is the teaching of Erasmus Catholic? Can it be followed without danger? Does it not conceal the poison of the prevailing heresy, that is to say, the sentiments of Luther expressed in specious phrases?"

The syndic Bedda and a Doctor of Divinity named William Duchesne were selected to reply to these questions, and after due and fitting time made their reports to the following effect: that the teaching of Erasmus was erroneous in many passages, that it boldly attacked morality, that it treated with impiety and indignity the monastic institution, and that it was heretical in certain regards. This report was accepted as expressing the judgment of the Sorbonne, on April 7, 1525. De Loin, like a good friend, sent Erasmus the heads of the subjects condemned by the Sorbonne, accompanied by good advice as to his future action, following which lead Erasmus wrote to Bedda, asking him to examine and point out similar errors in his other *Paraphrases,* should there be such, and telling him that there was nothing he had so much at heart as the avoiding of error and the giving of scandal. At the same time he exerted all his powers in minimizing the errors that Bedda had already pointed out, a proceeding which did not serve to make him popular with Bedda, who answered his letter somewhat coldly and advised him to cease writing since what he had written was proving dangerous, unless he would correct it. He complimented him on his style, and said he had a divine genius and eloquent facility of expression. This faint praise accompanying the admonition that he should cease writing aroused the choler of Erasmus, so that he assailed Bedda most vigorously. He informed him that everybody else did not feel that he should cease writing; for the greatest kings, nobles, and potentates, the Popes, Cardinals, and bishops, had constantly exhorted him to continue to write, and he quoted among their number Popes Adrian and Clement, the king and queen of England, the Cardinals of York, Sion, Volterra, and Campegio, the Archbishop of Canterbury, and the Bishop of Lincoln. "I imagine," he writes, "that you will not have the presumption to think your opinion in this matter should be taken in preference to that of all these." [8]

This burst of what appeared to be self-glorification aroused the ire of Bedda, who declared that Erasmus had uttered it in a moment of petulance, that it manifested overweening pride, and that one could not read it without coming to the conclusion that Erasmus deemed himself above and beyond all other men. Erasmus now began to feel that perhaps he had been too hasty, so he wrote another letter to Bedda in which he regretted his hastiness, and, finding that his works were sure

[8] Eras. Ep. 1581, ll. 680-1.

to displease someone or other, informed him that he was going to follow his advice and cease writing for the present, but would spend his time expunging what was deemed erroneous and correcting what seemed to demand it. He insisted that, because the Pope, the Emperor, and the Hierarchy were with him in the main, that in itself testified to his staunch Catholicity, as also the fact that the partisans of Luther held him in particular abhorrence. Bedda accepted the olive branch, saying that he had only read as much of Erasmus' works as was contained in the extracts which had been presented to him for examination. He admitted that not all the articles that had been called in question were censurable, and even agreed that some of them might be justified. But upon the proposition advanced by Erasmus that some of the Epistles attributed to St. Paul were open to doubt, meaning particularly the one to the Laodiceans and those to Seneca, their opinions clashed; and when Erasmus further advanced the assertion that even the Epistle to the Hebrews was rejected by some of the most orthodox writers, Bedda boiled over and proceeded to handle Erasmus without gloves, telling him that all good theologians were displeased with his writings and felt constrained to oppose the errors found therein. Then he set about issuing pamphlets, in which he pointed out the dangerous tenets to be found in the works of Erasmus, thus cutting off all further hope of an accommodation between them. On this, Erasmus attacked Bedda vindictively, even to the extent of carrying the matter before the Parliament of Paris, and asserted that in the criticisms of Bedda there were more than one hundred calumnies and untruths. He admitted that there might be errors in his works, but maintained that no one had yet been able to point out in them anything that had been codemned by the Church. He declared his willingness at all times to correct what might be detrimental to piety and morality, expressing at the same time his profound respect for the Sorbonne, even though its judgment in the matter had been unduly influenced by Bedda. Lastly, he testified to his high estimation of all goodly members of the Religious Orders, and made the startling statement that, had his health permitted, he would gladly have ended his days amongst them. The aim of all this evidently was to obtain from the above-mentioned Parliament of Paris a prohibition against the circulation of Bedda's effusions, and, failing in that, to obtain permission for the publication of his own replies. Not resting on this alone, he wrote to King Francis I himself, who had apparently been approached by some of the friends of Erasmus at that monarch's court, to intervene in his behalf, with the result that the king notified the Parliament that he was not pleased with the conduct of some of the Doctors of Theology who had assailed Erasmus. Erasmus represented to the king that Bedda had lied about his writings and had calumniated him, and ended by making the same requests to him that he had previously made to the Parliament. The king granted the requests and sent the required order to Bedda on no account to issue the work which he then had in hand against Erasmus. But the Sorbonne, whose agent Bedda really was, chose to disregard the royal mandate and even sent Bedda to the court to set forth to the king the position which the Sor-

bonne had taken in the matter. The king refused to listen to him and had him given into custody, only releasing him on his promise to present himself in court whenever his presence should be required. As long as it had been a question between Erasmus and the Sorbonne, that institution had had the better of the argument; but, when the king decided to take the part of Erasmus, the Sorbonne and Bedda had to yield a forced submission. This was the origin of all the difficulties between Erasmus and the theological faculty of the University of Paris. Bedda was now compelled to be silent while Erasmus published a new work, *Supputationes errorum in censuris N. Bedae,* in which he tried to maintain the theses to which Bedda had so strenuously objected.[9] Great as was De Burigni's admiration for Erasmus, he could not help admitting that some of the propositions advanced by him to which Bedda had objected were rash and false. He says:

> We do not pretend, however, that Erasmus was secure from all censure; we will not dissimulate that it happened to him often to advance propositions which not only were inexact, but which were capable of scandalizing reasonable people. There were two especially which were condemned by the Council of Trent. The first is that, when children have come to the age of reason, it is proper to question them in order to find out if they ratify the baptism which they have received in their infancy, and in case they do not wish to do so to leave them their liberty in the matter. The Faculty of Paris had already condemned this desire of Erasmus, as did also the Council of Sens in 1528. The Council of Trent in an assembly afterwards decided that the Sorbonne was in the right; they treated the proposition of Erasmus as impious, pernicious, and apt to destroy the Christian religion; they added that, if the circumcised children of the Jews coming to the age of reason were obliged to obey the law under pain of punishment, it was still more just to compel the children of the faithful to observe the law of Jesus Christ. . . . The second point which displeased the fathers of the Council of Trent in the teaching of Erasmus was that wherein he seems to make original sin consist in the prevarication of Adam, a proceeding which appears to renew the doctrine of Pelagius, who had advanced that Adam had only hurt his posterity by the bad example which he had set them.[10]

It would seem that Erasmus was somewhat ungenerous towards his silenced opponent, for, while Bedda was unable to say a word, Erasmus took advantage of the order of the king and made hay while the sun

[9] As Bedda was a Frenchman, De Burigni, in his *Life of Erasmus,* goes into exhaustive details about the difficulties existing between his fellow-countryman and Erasmus; and, although I have adopted some of De Burigni's deductions, I have not felt that I should go into this matter to the extent that he did. De Burigni's work is a mine of information for many points not treated by any other biographers of Erasmus, and I wish here to declare my indebtedness to him in several instances.

[10] *Vie d'Érasme,* Vol. II, pp. 227-9.

shone. In his above-mentioned work, he retorted on Bedda's estimate of fifty erroneous propositions noted by him in the works of Erasmus by stating that he had found one hundred and eighty-one lies, three hundred and ten calumnies, and forty-seven blasphemies in the censures of Bedda, not to mention the ignorance, the folly, and the absurdity so evident therein. This was a hard slap at the Sorbonne, and it was a battle to the death, no quarter being given. Although Bedda had been silenced by the royal mandate, he did not remain idle and apparently continued the battle with the aid of others, in order not to incur the royal vengeance. But what he had said before he was silenced still served to rankle in the heart of Erasmus. For instance, he had declared that it was the custom of Erasmus to dedicate his works to the great ones of the earth, and that all good advice was lost on him. Erasmus was stung by this because it was true, but replied that when he dedicated his books to kings and potentates it was because he wanted to draw their attention to the principles he was advocating, and also because sometimes the courtiers besought him thus to honor their masters. He denied that he was not open to good advice, and said that he had even made use of some furnished him by Lee, and even Bedda himself. Bedda, or someone acting for him, had procured to be printed and circulated another pamphlet assailing Erasmus in much the same way as formerly; and it would seem that the Sorbonne, after some hesitation, had given him the necessary permission, and his friends had done the rest. Erasmus answered again in great anger, expressing his surprise at the temerity of Bedda and the Sorbonne in daring to contravene the king's mandate. It was an endless and useless controversy, which, like all the others in which he had been engaged, brought him no reward or even commendation, but served to use up his valuable time which could have been better spent in other ways. He could not realize that he was expecting too much from the people of that turbulent generation in demanding that they should accept everything he wrote without question, on the grounds of his superior scholarship. This arrogation on his part was surely responsible for much of the existing hostility to learning; and, if the ignorance of that day must be censured, so too must be the pride and arrogance of intellect.

But Erasmus had begun to note a carelessness of his interests developing at the French court, and that his friends there were no longer willing or able to protect him against the attacks of Bedda. He perceived also that he had been unwise in taking an unfair advantage of Bedda, and concluded that it might perhaps be better to try gentler methods. He had just heard too that Bedda was again soliciting the Sorbonne to condemn him, and so he wrote him a letter which, without lowering his dignity too much, might suggest to Bedda that he desired his friendship rather than his enmity. He pointed out how easy it was for any man's words to be misinterpreted, and that if one expressed one's self poorly, it gave calumny a chance to misrepresent one's sentiments. He said that for himself he was ready to forget the past; and added that, if in anything he had written he seemed too harsh and bitter towards Bedda, he was ready to ask his pardon and to make amends for his lack

of consideration. He said that a glance over what they had been disputing about would show it to have been about words mainly, about mutilated passages, and about hateful suspicions.[11] The above letter from which we have been quoting is dated November 16, 1527, and we have here to note the characteristic Erasmian touch, that, while he was striving to beguile Bedda with soft phrases, he had already written four days previously to the Sorbonne, making fresh accusations against that abused but still militant theologian. He made light of Bedda's pamphlet, in which he declared its author to have vented all his passionate animosity, and further added that Bedda had previously aided Lee in the writing of the latter's book. To this he appended all the errors which he had found in Bedda's reply to him, and then he told the Sorbonne that he would rest his case in their hands, fully expecting that they would do him justice. But he was not in the least inclined to trust himself and his case to the Sorbonne: he was too wary and experienced an antagonist for that; for just two days after the dispatch of his letter to them he addressed himself again to the Parliament. In this address he represented how Bedda had published another work against him contrary to the king's order, in which work he had gone beyond all limits in trying to avenge himself on Erasmus, that he had tried to bias the Faculty of Theology against him, that he had brought before said Faculty many passages selected from Erasmus' writings which ran the risk of being condemned by said Faculty through the intrigues and violent methods of Bedda, that said passages were in some instances mutilated or lifted from their context. He said that he would entrust his case to the Parliament, and that he would devote himself to insuring peace to the Church, and would even consult the dignity of the Sorbonne. Then he added a veiled menace that, if the Parliament failed to see things in a proper light, he would appeal to the king himself, who would not hesitate to silence those who for the sake of pleasing a few false monks were pursuing tactics that were opposed to the spirit of true religion. And that he kept his word in the last instance is evident from the following extract from a letter to the king's relative and intimate, Cardinal John of Lorraine:

> While I am striving with all my power to put an end to the divisions in the Church, and to restore tranquillity, Natalis Bedda is exciting fresh disturbances. . . . Although I have replied most fully to his many charges, he still keeps on making them, as if they had not been answered at all. By such tricks as these he hopes to have my works prohibited here, so that he may be considered a little deity. . . . That he may accomplish this aim securely, he endeavors to associate with his extravagances the authority of the Faculty of Theology, although the most rational part of that Faculty would condemn and disapprove of his feeble and disturbing efforts if it were permitted them each to speak his own mind. . . . So, if His Royal Majesty will silence all this sort of malicious conspiracies, he will be acting for the best interests of his kingdom, and at the same

[11] Eras. Ep. (LB) col. 1038.

> time be doing his utmost for the tranquillity of the Church and the furtherance of learning, which never flourish better than when they are winning the approbation of erudite and worthy theologians. . . . Moreover, no book must be forthwith condemned because some error is found in it, since many are found even in the works of the most approved fathers of the Church. It is better to connive at such human lapses, from which there frequently arises greater harm when they are discussed.[12]

We may note here in passing that Erasmus did not see any inconsistency in his assuming the right to criticize the works of St. Jerome and St. Augustine, and even to change the meaning of some passages of Holy Writ, as he undoubtedly did in his translation of the New Testament, while he absolutely and testily refused the right to Bedda and the rest of his critics to exercise the same privilege with regard to his own theological writings. However, on December 16, 1527, the Faculty of Theology handed down its condemnation of thirty-two points in Erasmus' teaching.[13] What made this particularly galling to Erasmus was the concluding sentence of the condemnation; for, though his name was not mentioned therein, there was no other person than Erasmus to whom the allusions could be made. It runs as follows:

> We have thought to be of service in this censure to those who are sufficiently unreasonable as to imagine that what is written in fine style is true, and what is written in poor style cannot help but be false. We have also had in view those who believe that it is enough for a man to know Greek and Hebrew to be a consummate theologian, in which they make a great mistake, since those who have a knowledge of these languages should be regarded only as grammarians, unless they have been instructed in the first principles of theology.[14]

There is some mystification here. Is it possible that the Sorbonne did not regard Erasmus' theological qualifications as sufficient to entitle him to the right of passing on theological questions like other Doctors of Divinity; or, in other words, did they regard the Doctor's degree which he had obtained at Turin as not of proper value to warrant him in assuming such a privilege? This is a possibility, since that University was of recent inception and had not yet acquired much reputation as a school of divinity.

The Parliament was very much piqued at the censure of the Sorbonne, and delayed fully four years the necessary permission to print it. However, Erasmus heard the news with more than his usual equanimity, and even disavowed the errors that the Sorbonne had pointed out. There must have been some very cogent reason for this sudden access of humility, since he wrote a little work called *Declarations* in acknowledgment of the judgment of the Faculty of the University, in which he says:

[12] Eras. Ep. (H) p. 673.
[13] A resumé of these can be seen in De Burigni's work, Vol. II, p. 243.
[14] De Burigni, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, pp. 245-6.

> The University of Paris is by the consent of the whole world the first of all universities; one may with reason call it the citadel of the Christian religion; hence it ought not to be allowed to anyone to assail its dignity in any manner whatsoever; and I will pay less attention in this apology to defending my unjustly attacked innocence than I will take care not to advance anything which might injure the authority of the Sorbonne.[15]

Then he says that he appeals from the Sorbonne asleep to the Sorbonne awake, and proceeds to show how much he is in accord with that institution and that, where he does not seem to be in perfect agreement, it is due solely to misapprehension of his meaning. Occasionally he does admit that he has not spoken with exactness, but insists that he is entirely subject to the Church in all his words and acts. This was his final attitude towards the Sorbonne in the matter, and here we shall leave the subject, saying, however, that time has justified Erasmus in some of the contentions for which the Sorbonne condemned him, while, on the other hand, time has affirmed the judgment of that body on the main points of their censure. It will be sufficient justification in the reader's mind, for both Erasmus and the Sorbonne, to recall the fact that all these disputes took place long before the Council of Trent had formally defined such matters, for since that Council has fixed the tenets of Catholic belief it is no longer either permissible or useful to speculate on what are now articles of faith. The Church, regarded as merely a human institution, has the right to define the terms under which it will admit to its membership; and those who find such terms irksome are free to seek elsewhere for the spiritual consolation which she affords. Thus Erasmus has this justification for some of the errors with which he was charged, namely, that in his day the Church had not publicly, officially, and formally defined them. All that can be said on the subject is that he manifested bad judgment in speaking and writing contrary to the common sentiment which had become venerable by age and revered by tradition. In all times of religious action and reaction suspicion is very rife, optimism gives way to pessimism, doubt is easily engendered and the uneducated multitude wrested from their moorings. It was for the multitude that Lee, Stunica, Caranza, Sutor, Bedda, Alberto Pio, and most of the other antagonists of Erasmus, were solicitous, while Erasmus appealed to the fewer but more erudite members of the Church. Mistakes were made by both sides, as is usual in controversy; but, if we can acquit both sides of insincerity, their errors ought not now to count against them. The duty of deciding on that point we will leave to the reader.

Poor Bedda! Almost all we know of him has been told us by his enemies, and consequently needs to be discounted. We have already seen what a picture of him Erasmus has handed down in his anger. Following his lead, Rabelais, who does not seem to have had any personal acquaintance with him, exposed him to eternal ridicule by attributing to him the authorship of a work on the excellence of tripe, in

[15] *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 248.

allusion to a trait sought to be fastened on him by others of his enemies that he was a gourmand.[16] If he was overzealous and indiscreet at times, so also were Luther and Erasmus; but whereas these latter always looked for support and encouragement to kings and potentates, at times even shutting their eyes to glaring faults in their protectors, Bedda, on the contrary, did not fear to upbraid, with more sincerity than discretion, his hereditary sovereign, Francis I, for being too lax with the heretics of his kingdom, for which assurance he was sent into exile. His real justification lies in the fact that just at that moment the works of Erasmus were enjoying a sudden and widespread popularity in France, and among them were the *Praise of Folly* and the *Colloquies,* which had been republished there recently. These two books, containing, as we know, things of doubtful morality and execrable taste, were the proximate occasions for Bedda's zeal; and, from what we have already seen of them, justified his animosity, if not his lack of discretion. The Faculty of the University saw things much as Bedda did, or he could not have had so much influence over them; so it was a great triumph for Bedda and an equally great defeat for Erasmus that, on May 15, 1526, the Faculty proceeded formally to prohibit the reading of the *Colloquies,* especially to the young, because of the "erroneous, scandalous, and impious propositions contained in the book entitled *Familiar Colloquies,* by Desiderius Erasmus of Rotterdam, in the year of our Lord 1526, in which work the author, as though he were a pagan, ridicules, satirizes, and sneers at the Christian religion and its holy ceremonies and observances, tears them to shreds, and decrees that they must be changed."[17] It is probable that Bedda was much similar in disposition and temperament to Erasmus, and could not endure criticism with equanimity. We are not sure that the colloquy Ἰχθυοφαγία appeared in the first edition of the *Colloquies* published in Paris in 1518, or in that published in 1522, but it was certainly in the one published at Paris in 1526. This colloquy, treating as it does of the daily life, food, etc., in the College of Montaigu, must have given terrible offense to Bedda, who had been recently the principal of that institution; and hence we can attribute some of his rancor for Erasmus to other more natural causes than pure fanaticism. Erasmus used the *Colloquies* to ridicule, attack, revile, excoriate, depreciate, and in every way to villify those who had the misfortune to displease him. It was a terrible engine of vengeance in his hands; and, if anyone is curious enough, let him observe in the *Colloquies* how Erasmus glutted his ire on Hutten by pillorying him as the braggart warrior in his *The Soldier and the Carthusian;* how he treated the kindly and courteous Andreas d'Asola by misrepresenting him in *The Wealthy Miser;* how he maligned Francis d'Hasselt and applied to him the filthy epithet of *Merdardus.*[18] As for the Faculty of Theology of the University of Paris, we have the testimony of Erasmus' friend J. Louis Vives as to its quality, since he said in a letter to Erasmus:

[16] See an article by E. H. Vollehin, *La Grande Encyclopedie, in loco.*

[17] LB, Vol. IX, col. 929.

[18] Almost every one of the characters ridiculed in the *Colloquies* is capable of identification, if one is curious enough to take the trouble.

It would take too long to tell you how they honored me out of the opinion they held of my talents. Not only do the heads of the nobility regard learning as proper for their rank and station, and cultivate it, leaving sordid things to the base, but the theologians of the University are especially noteworthy in that respect. You would hardly believe how frank they are, and how much better they interpret everything than many whom you know. It grieves them to be ignorant of anything, but they display no envy towards those who are well informed, and even encourage those who teach. . . . If anyone brings before the Sorbonne a proposition woven out of airy figments, forthwith the assembly frowns and objects, and with hisses and clacking drives him from the conference.[19]

[19] Eras. Ep. 1108, ll. 42-9, 73-6.

CHAPTER XVIII

LAST LETTER TO LUTHER; SOME WORKS OF ERASMUS IN SPAIN

In spinning the thread of the controversy between Erasmus and Bedda we have again been forced to anticipate, so we will now go back to the beginning of 1526, at which time Luther once more wrote him a letter, half jocose and half serious, in which he tried to soften the harshness of some of his utterances consequent on their clash over freewill. He had been very abusive towards Erasmus in the *De seruo arbitrio,* but he wrote just as he felt towards him. His favorite epithet for him was "that viper." Writing of Erasmus to Nicholas Hausmann in January of this year, he says:

> That viper shall feel that his main arguments have been reached and attacked by me, nor shall it be made pleasant for him by any gentleness on my part. God grant that I am mistaken, but I know the disposition of the man, and that he will be an instrument of Satan unless God shall change him.[1]

There could be no possible approximation between two such men, the one grievously hurt in his intellectual pride, the other disappointed in his not unwarranted hope of assistance and encouragement. Luther had intimated that Erasmus was not a sincere Christian, and the latter resented it. In return he hinted that Luther was a hypocrite because, while he was proclaiming that he was a poor weak sinner, he was demanding that the whole world should do him honor. We shall here give Erasmus' reply to this last letter of Luther, since it will show better than any words of ours how matters stood between them:

> Your letter reached me too late, but even had it arrived promptly it would not have moved me in the least. I am not of such a childish disposition that, after being subjected to such supreme insults, I can be amused by a couple of jokes, or softened with caressing flattery. The world has long known your character, but you have so tempered your pen that never hitherto have you written anything against any man so savagely or—what is far more detestable—more maliciously. It has occurred to you, forsooth, that you are a weak sinner, although elsewhere you all but demand to be regarded as God. You are a man, so you write, that is endowed with a vehement disposition, and you delight in a subject so remarkable. Why then did you not pour out your wonderful invective long since on the Bishop of Rochester, or Cochleus? both of whom inveigh against you by name, and burden you with reproaches, while my

[1] De Wette, *Luthers Briefe,* Vol. III, p. 87.

Diatribe was only a courteous disputation. In such a discussion what need was there for so many scurrilous remarks, and so many wicked lies to the effect that I was an atheist, an Epicurean, and a sceptic in everything pertaining to the profession of a Christian; that I was a blasphemer and what not, in addition to other things which you concealed? But I bear such things all the more patiently in that my conscience pricks me not in the slightest degree with regard to any one of those charges. If I did not feel as a Christian man should, concerning God and Holy Writ, I would not wish my life to be prolonged even unto to-morrow. If you had stated your case with your usual vehemence but had dispensed with your furious abuse, you would have provoked the enmity of fewer people; now it has gratified your feelings to occupy more than a third of your volume in satisfying your grudge. What a contrast in this respect you are to me is clearly shown by the fact that, while you charge me with so many open offenses, my *Diatribe* did not even touch on the things which all the world is aware of.

I suppose you think that Erasmus has no defenders, but there are more than you guess. Now it matters not at all what happens to us two, or at least to me who must die in a short time, even though the universal world applaud us, but this annoys every good man as well as myself that, by reason of that arrogant, shameless, and seditious disposition of yours, you disturb the whole world by your destructive dissension, that you expose good men, lovers of learning, to a few mad Pharisees, that you furnish equipment for those of abandoned and rebellious lives to indulge in riot, and, in a word, that you so treat the cause of the Gospel that you turn all things, whether sacred or profane, into turmoil, as if it were your especial wish that this tempest should not at length have a fortunate end, a thing for which I have ever striven. What obligation you are under to me, and what return you have made me, I will not touch on, for, whatever that is, it is a private matter. It is the public calamity and the irremediable confusion of everything that distresses me, and this we owe to nothing else than your ungovernable disposition, which cannot be guided by those who give you good advice, but yields readily to any and every clever trickster. I know not who such people are whom you have dragged up from the powers of darkness; but it is against those ungrateful wretches that you ought to sharpen your pen rather than against my kindly disputation. I would wish for you a better state of mind did not your present one delight you so much. You may wish for me anything you like, your state of mind excepted, unless the Lord shall change it for you. Basle, April, 1526.[2]

This was very tart and not at all the sort of thing which would please Luther; so, from this time on, all measures of conciliation, or even of accommodation, were out of the question. Whether intentionally or not, Luther had the advantage over Erasmus of keeping him on the

[2] Eras. Ep. 1688.

defensive, which was important from a tactical point of view. But this was not the worst of it, for Erasmus had also to be on the defensive against those who insisted that he was responsible by his writings for the length to which Luther had carried things in his war against Rome. And in his inmost heart Erasmus knew that there was some reason for the charge, and in his extremity he had resort to the subterfuge of repeating that Popes, kings, and men of rank everywhere had praised his writings, but at the very bottom of his soul he knew that they had not endorsed everything that he had asserted, and that the anticipation of what he might accomplish in the fight with Luther had tempered the criticisms of many of them.

But the year 1526 brought him the news that his *Enchiridion* was to be translated into Spanish. Ordinarily this would have been good news, but as things were now he had reason to be doubtful, since he knew that this work, along with his *Praise of Folly* and the *Colloquies,* was raising up enemies for him everywhere. Nor was he deceived in his anticipations, for he very soon learned that the Spaniards had fallen on these books with the firm intention to rend and destroy them. His quondam critic Lee, of whom we have previously spoken at length, had been sent to represent his sovereign King Henry VIII at the Spanish court; and, retaining all his former lack of confidence in Erasmus, had made no secret of his sentiments. The Archbishop of Toledo, Alfonzo Fonseca, believing that Erasmus' talents might be made to serve the Church and to cope successfully with Luther, chose for the present to be friendly with him. He writes him, "Everyone believes not only that Erasmus is equal to the task, but that he is the only one," and refuses to admit his alleging of scant ability and all that sort of thing. He tells him to go on as he has begun and that, while he is deserving well of the Church, he is winning for himself at the same time an immortal name.[3] But Stunica, Caranza, and other Spaniards had written to some purpose, for they had aroused the vigilance of the clergy of that country, so that it was no surprise to Erasmus to be informed by Vives that efforts were being made to have his works prohibited throughout Spain. He comments on the fact in a letter to Juan Vergara, who was secretary to Fonseca, and in whom he felt he could confide. To him he opens up his troubles in all other parts of the world, blaming them on the monks principally. So far his *Praise of Folly* and his *Colloquies* had not been done into Spanish, and he was already fearful of the effect their translation might have on his interests there. As he very aptly puts it when writing to Francisco Vergara, the brother of Juan mentioned above, and himself a professor in the University of Alcalá, "Before my *Enchiridion* was translated into Spanish Erasmus was less famous and less praised among the Spaniards, but at the same time less hated."[4] This hatred he of course incurred on the part of the Spanish monks, who, like their brethren of all other countries, objected strenuously to the characterization of them and their Orders which Erasmus had bestowed on them in his *Enchiridion,* and had no doubt heard that in his *Praise of Folly* and the *Collo-*

[3] Eras. Ep. (LB), col. 1086D. [4] *Ibid.,* col. 1020B.

quies he had held them up to open scorn and ridicule He had stolen away their good name, and, like the tigress robbed of her young, they met him at every step to rend him in pieces. Jortin cannot always accept without question everything that Erasmus says about the monks of his times, and his hesitation to do so made him once utter the following very true observation:

> The remaining part of this year, Erasmus poured out his complaints to heaven and earth against the Monks and the Reformers; so that it is not easy to say which of the two parties stood the lowest and the worst in his opinion. When we read his description of the monks, we cannot think that viler men were to be found upon the face of the earth than the *religious* of those days; and when we see how he censures the immoral lives of the Lutherans and the Reformed, we cannot conceive how such men could support themselves and their cause, and escape the contempt and the horror of mankind.[5]

Here we catch Jortin in one of the rare moments when he chose to be fair.

Martin Bucer, one of the most moderate of the reformers, with a desire like that of Melancthon to bring about peace and concord between the clashing parties, wrote to Erasmus to enlist his services to that end. Since Bucer was a learned and withal judicious sort of man who struck one with his evident sincerity, Erasmus thought proper to answer his epistle, and this answer will show us what he felt as to the chances of universal reconciliation. We quote it in part:

> You can gather from a thousand conjectures why I have not given my adhesion to your church. But here is the first and the greatest reason, namely, that my conscience withholds me from associating myself with your party; for, if my conscience could have been persuaded that what you are doing proceeds from God, I should long ago have been fighting with you in the same camp. The next reason is that I see many in your ranks who are far removed from Evangelic sincerity. I am not now making use of rumors or suspicions, but of facts that I have found out to my misfortune, and the people I speak of are not the common herd alone, but are those who desire to be held of consequence, and I might say that some of them are of princely rank. . . . I knew some of them who were the best of men before they joined your persuasion; what they are now I know not, but of a surety I have found some of them worse than before, and not one of them better, as far as human judgment is able to discern. A third reason that has deterred my mind is that exceeding dissension which exists among the leaders of that movement. Omitting the prophets and the Anabaptists, how bitterly Zwingli, Luther, and Osiander flay each other in their books! I have never approved of the harshness of kings, but that is instigated by the manners of some of your

[5] *Erasmus,* Vol. I, p. 387.

leaders whom it behooved that the Gospel should be promoted by the holy and gentle courteousness of one's manners, if you would practice what you preach. To pass by other things, to what end did Luther so scurrilously rail against the king of England when the latter was engaged in so arduous an undertaking, and with the world's approval. . . . And he [Luther] is the chief of this party, with which I am not very angry; but that he treated myself so scurrilously, that he betrayed the cause of the Gospel, that he set kings, bishops, pseudo-monks, and pseudo-theologians against good men, that he has increased doubly a servitude that was already intolerable, this in very truth distresses my mind. . . . You will say that there is no gathering in which you will not find a few bad ones; but surely it was the duty of the prime leaders to look out for morality, and not to dignify by their approbation liars, perjurers, drunkards, and libertines. Now I hear, and in some measure see, that things are far otherwise. If a husband found his wife more exemplary, if a teacher found his pupil more obedient, if a magistrate found the citizen more tractable, if a master found his workman more faithful, and if a buyer found the seller less of a cheat, it would have been a great commendation for the Gospel. Now the morals of certain of your people are such that those who at first favored your movement from a love of piety and a hatred of pharisaism are grown cold, and meanwhile, our rulers behold the people growing disorderly, collected as they are from vagabonds, runaways, spendthrifts, the destitute, the wretched, and the evil-minded for the greater part; and even those who had conceived good hopes of them in the beginning now execrate them. I mention these things with great sorrow, not only because I foresee that this matter which has been badly managed will turn out still worse, but also because I shall have to smart for it. For a few who are somewhat hostile to me blame my writings for the fact that the scholastic theologians and monks in several places have become of less importance than they like, that ceremonies are being abandoned, that the pontifical authority is set at naught, although it is very evident from what source this evil has sprung up. . . . It behooved the leaders of this movement, if they had Christ for their aim, not only to abstain from all vices, but even from the very appearance of evil, and not to give the slightest little offense to the Gospel, studiously avoiding those things which, even though licit, were not expedient. In the first place, all sedition was to be avoided. If they had managed the matter sincerely and with moderation, they would have won the favor of the kings and the bishops, for not all of them were to be regarded as lost. Nor was anything to be rashly destroyed, unless that to a bad thing something better might succeed. But now, those who have thrown away their breviaries pray not at all. Many who have laid aside their pharisaic habit [6] are worse in their new ones than they were before the change. Some who despise the commands of the bishops obey not

[6] He means the monastic costume.

the precepts of God. Some who neglect food observances are making gluttons of themselves. . . . It was never a wish of mine that the Mass should be abrogated, even though the tribe of money-making priests were always displeasing to me. And there were other things which could have been altered without all this tumult. Now everything which we have received is offensive to some, as if it were possible to establish a new world all of a sudden. There will be always some things which must be put up with by pious men. If there are some who are so set on abolishing the Mass because some abuse it, then for the same reason sacred preaching, which is almost the only thing you accept, must be abolished. I feel the same way about the invocation of the saints, and about images. . . . I trust to your prudence not to hand this letter about, lest from it some trouble may arise. Farewell. Basle, November 11, 1527.[7]

Many inferences, which we will leave to the discretion of the reader, may be justly drawn from this letter; but we think it must be patent to all that Erasmus was at length beginning to concern himself with the principles involved in the Reformation, as well as with the methods that were being employed to bring it about. The methods were repugnant to his peace-loving nature, and the principles were manifesting to him their essential importance, probably as the result of his studies on free-will. Meanwhile, as the result of his vacillations, his position was one of great danger, since he had now definitely decided to have no more to do with the Lutheran party, while, on the other hand, he had not succeeded in allaying the suspicions of the Church officials. We have just seen that things were going badly for him in Spain, where the Inquisition had lately ordered his works to be subjected to close scrutiny. Feeling that, since the Sorbonne had already condemned some of his writings, the Inquisition could not fail to do the same, he wrote a letter to the only man living who, he thought, could help him in the circumstances. This was the Emperor Charles V, at that time in Spain, to whom he addressed himself in the following terms:

. . . Relying on the protection of Popes and princes, but especially on your Majesty, I have drawn on my head with great danger to my life the whole Lutheran faction, which I would were not so widely spread. If proof of this is needed, the *Seruum arbitrium,* which Luther in a more than hostile manner wrote against me, will testify, as will the two books of the *Hyperaspistes* in which I reply to him. Now, after this movement of Luther has begun to decline, and this partly from my efforts and trials, there are arising there [in Spain] certain people who, under a feigned pretext of religious zeal, are looking out for the interests of their bellies and their desire for power. I am fighting for Christ, not for the interests of men, while they are rendering Spain, that most fortunate country for many reasons, a land of unrest by these unsettled tumults. From preludes of this sort we shall see at length the greatest

[7] Eras. Ep. (LB) col. 1029D-1031A.

tempests arise; for, as a fact, this Lutheran movement sprang from much slighter causes. As far as I am concerned, I shall not cease to the last breath of my life to cherish the cause of Christian piety; and it will be the part of your Majesty's kindness constantly and continually to favor those who sincerely and stoutly defend the Church of God. Under the banners of Christ and your own I fight, and under them will I die; but I will die with a more satisfied mind if I may be first permitted to see tranquillity restored to the Church and to the whole of Christendom by your power, your wisdom, and your good fortune. I shall never cease to pray that God will grant us this through your efforts, and may He preserve your Majesty and prosper you always. Basle, September 2, 1527.[8]

The Emperor wrote him a kind though very reserved letter, in which he expressed his gratitude that through the efforts of Erasmus Lutheranism had been checked, and said that Erasmus needed not to fear an examination of his works by the Inquisition, since if anything were found in them contrary to the teaching of the Church it would be very easy for him to correct it, and if nothing of that nature were found such examination would only redound to his glory. Wise young Emperor! Not even Erasmus was going to put him into an equivocal position. And, accordingly, in a few months Erasmus was engaged in defending himself against his Spanish critics as earnestly and as hard as he ever defended himself against Lee, Bedda, Stunica, Egmondanus, and the rest. Which leads us to insert here his gleeful announcement, in a letter to a friend, of the death of two at least of his tormentors: "Vincent is dead of an excruciating tympanites, while Nicholas Egmondanus, whom no one could endure, was suffocated while vomiting." [9]

We will close this chapter and the year 1527 by inserting some passages of a letter which he wrote to a certain good old monk who had sent him some little gifts:

. . . I am afraid that you may be imposed upon by the specious deceptions of certain persons who are boasting in splendid phrases of the Gospel liberty of to-day. Believe me, if you understood more of this movement from close observation, you would not be tired of that life you are leading. I see a class of men coming forth from whom my soul earnestly shrinks. I see no one becoming better, but, as many as I have known, they are surely worse, so that I sincerely grieve that formerly in my works I advocated spiritual freedom, though I did it with good intentions, never suspecting that such people would arise. It was my desire that something of ceremony might be abated, so that true piety might thereby benefit. Now the ceremonies are abandoned in such a way that instead of spiritual liberty there has succeeded an uncontrolled license of the flesh. Some towns of Germany are filled with vagabonds, monks who have run away from their monasteries, priests who have married, most of them hungry and naked. There is

[8] *Ibid.*, col. 1016F-1017B. [9] *Ibid.*, col. 974C.

nothing going on amongst them but dancing, eating, drinking, and fornication. They neither teach nor study, and there is no sobriety nor sincerity of life. Wherever they are, all good order ceases together with piety. I would write you more about these matters if it were safe to commit it to paper. You have lived worthily for so many years in that community of yours, and now, as you say yourself, your life is verging towards its evening, although you are perhaps eight or nine years younger than I. You dwell in a most commodious locality, in a fine climate, where the conversation of learned men brings to you much of solace, where there is an abundance of books, where there is intelligence. What in this life can be sweeter than to spend your leisure in meadows of this sort? there tasting in advance, as it were, the felicity of celestial existence, especially in an age like the present, than which nothing can be depicted more turbulent or calamitous. I have known several of those who, having been deceived by the empty hope of liberty, have deserted their monasteries. Having changed their habit, they married; but, poverty-stricken and exiles, they became detestable to those to whom they were previously dear, and finally came to that state that, although there were those who wished to help them, it was not safe to do so. How their conscience troubles them, only the Lord knows; and how in their hearts their new surroundings suit them, is for them to see. What kind of liberty is that where it is not allowable to say prayers, where it is not permitted to say Mass, where it is not proper to fast, where it is not licit to abstain from meat? Think what could be more wretched than such things, even in these times? If a man be young and rich, he may for a few years enjoy the pleasures of this world, if indeed there be such here. But to seek to enjoy them when he is already advanced in years indicates insanity rather than mere folly. But you will say the rules and regulations are onerous, not to mention the jealousies and things of a similar nature. Whatever of such sort there may be present, it is the merest trifle to bear, provided that your disposition be good. In the world you would have to endure harsher things. So may God grant better sentiments to those people who by their wonderful tales are disturbing the tranquillity of your mind. May I die if I should not prefer to dwell with you there than to be the highest bishop in the palace of the Emperor, provided that this poor, weak body of mine had strength to live there. But you are not aware either of the happiness you are enjoying, or the misery of the times. . . . Hence, my dearest brother in the Lord, through our long and ancient friendship, and in the name of Christ, I beg, beseech, and entreat you to banish this weariness from your mind, and not to give ear to the deadly talk of men who will assist you not at all, but who will laugh at you rather when they have enticed you into the pit. If with all your heart you will despise the false attractions of this world, if you will give yourself entirely to Christ, if you will devote yourself to sacred literature and to meditating on the heavenly life, believe me, you will find more than abundant

solace, and this little weariness of which you speak will vanish like smoke. If you take my advice and afterwards find that what I say is not true, then reproach me accordingly. And now, my dearest friend and brother in the Lord, may that same Lord fill your heart with every spiritual consolation. Basle, 1527.[10]

This is a letter to be pondered over, since it sheds a flood of light on the character of Erasmus, or, to be more exact, on the opinions which he held towards the close of his life. We know not who was the disturbed and anxious brother who had written to him for advice as to what course he should pursue in the cataclysm brought about by Luther. It may very well have been one of the younger novices whom he had left behind him at Steyn when he himself was leaving its portals to enter the great world as secretary to the Bishop of Cambrai. Whoever he was, he had no doubt read and admired Erasmus, and had turned over in his mind what the great writer had said in depreciation of the monastic life. And now, when he was grown old and beheld Luther emptying the monasteries and convents and marrying off their inmates, his mind was filled with unrest and he was puzzled to know what it were best to do in his own case. So he had written to Erasmus, telling him of his mental indecision, and received the above letter in reply. This letter of Erasmus rings with sincerity and shows him to us at a moment when he was not thinking solely of himself. After a lifetime spent in disparaging the monastic institution, he is now in his sixty-second year experiencing a change of heart, and so he tells the monk to stick to his monastery, that the liberty of the spirit promised by Luther was no liberty at all, that by implication spiritual liberty was to be found inside the convent walls; and from the authoritative lips of Erasmus the monk learns that it is good to fast, that it is good to read one's breviary, that it is good to take part in the ceremonies of the Church when conducted in the proper spirit. This is a new Erasmus entirely that we are now meeting at the end of 1527, ten years after Luther had first raised the standard of revolt in Germany which had so pleased him at the time; and we may believe him implicitly when he tells his inquiring brother that he is sorry for much of what he had written as to spiritual freedom, that, as far as lay in his power, he had tried to undo any harm he might have done his weaker brethren, and ended by beseeching him to remain in his monastery and serve God there as he had always done.

[10] *Ibid.*, col. 1025A-F.

CHAPTER XIX

EUROPE IN TURMOIL: ERASMUS AMID THE STORM; TROUBLE OVER WRITINGS IN SPAIN

The world was in an uproar in the year of grace 1528. In France, the Constable of Bourbon had deserted his own king Francis I and had gone over to Emperor Charles, with whom Francis was at enmity. Two years after this, the armies of the two monarchs met in mortal combat at Pavia, where Francis was taken prisoner and his army destroyed. In Germany, the peasants had risen against their feudal lords, and their progress for several years was marked with fire and slaughter. At Rome, the pontifical throne was occupied by Clement VII, a Pope whose private life was unblemished, but whose political career seems by the consent of almost all historians to have been a series of tactical errors. As one writer puts it, "He was an Italian prince, a de' Medici, and a diplomat first, and a spiritual ruler afterwards. His intelligence was of a high order, though his diplomacy was feeble and irresolute." [1] He had concluded a secret treaty with France, notwithstanding that the Emperor had smashed Francis's power and had held him prisoner until he had signed a treaty satisfactory to himself. The Emperor had desired a compact with Clement, but that Pope thought he saw a greater advantage in making friends with that monarch's enemy, the ruler of the French. As a consequence, the troops of the Emperor, under the command of the disloyal Constable of Bourbon, had on May 6, 1527, fallen upon Rome, which city they sacked and burned with the utmost cruelty and destruction, putting many of the inhabitants to the sword, and even shutting up Pope Clement in the Castle of St. Angelo for several months. At last the Emperor's messenger, Veyre, arrived in Rome, bearing to the Pope an offer of his liberty, provided that he would not side with the Emperor's enemies, that he would agree to a general peace, and that he would call a general council of the Church for the purpose of reforms. The Pope signed this agreement, but, unchastened by his reverses, he escaped from Rome two weeks later, and again put himself in communication with Francis. But the tide of battle went against the French, and Clement beholding Italy decimated by war and pestilence and his own pontifical city little more than a ruin, at last gave way to the Emperor. But the *Landsknechte* of the Constable of Bourbon, who were mostly Lutherans, had done their work only too well, and had glutted their hatred of all things Roman by sparing neither the animate nor the inanimate, and too late Clement realized the tactical error he had made in allying the fortunes of the Papacy to those of France. To all this war and turmoil must

[1] See article in *Cath. Ency.*, art. "Clement VII."

be added the impending disorders of the Anabaptist movement which Erasmus very justly feared might bring disaster to Germany, a fear which was only too well realized in the following years. He dwells on the state of things in a letter to More, begging him to thank King Henry for his kindness in inviting him to come and reside in England, another proof that his work *On Freewill* had somewhat restored him to the estimation of a few of his English friends:

> In the numerous difficulties with which I am surrounded, the letter of the king, couched as it was in the kindliest terms, inviting me to England and promising everything worthy of such a benign prince, afforded me the greatest solace. He reminded me of what I had formerly written to him, that I had selected England as an abode for my old age. But now, my dear More, things are in such a state that I ought rather to be looking around for a place to lay my bones where it will be permissible for me to repose in death, since I perceive that such is not possible for me anywhere while I live. All men predict that a great revolt is upon us. The heretical sect of the Anabaptists, which is more widely spread than anyone thinks, is meditating an eruption. You will learn of my own troubles from my messenger Quirinus, a youth of tried reliability, whom I have decided to send to England because he knows all my affairs, so that I might arrange with my friends there as to what could be done, or what was best to be done. I would have rendered thanks to the king for his kindness, but, half-dead as I am from so many toils, and having no leisure, I preferred not to write at all to such a monarch than in a perfunctory way. If you will be so good, you can declare to him my gratitude, and that I am not ignorant or unmindful of the exceeding generosity which he has so often manifested in my behalf, though I feel I merit it not at all. I trust that you, and all those who are most dear to you, are well. Basle, February 28, 1528.[2]

In his present unsettled and anxious state of mind he cast longing glances towards England, now almost the only country in Europe where active warfare was not going on. In addition to writing the above letter to More, he wrote another one to Richard Pace, who, he had just heard, had returned to England. In it he tells him that he had sent the above-mentioned Quirinus Talesius to England for two purposes, to stop the further plundering of the pension which he derived from Archbishop Warham, and to consult wth his friends there whether he might profitably accept the king's invitation to reside in that favored land; for, as he tells Pace, "I may have to get out of here [Basle] *nolens volens*."[3] Writing to the Count Neuenahr, he speaks again of the storms which are impending over Europe, but his fear seems to be mainly for himself, as he tells the Count that he can see no place to which to betake himself; for, although he has been invited to England by both the king and Archbishop Warham, matters will not be very convenient

[2] Eras. Ep. (LB) col. 1062D-F. [3] *Ibid.*, col. 1060F.

there.[4] Oecolampadius was making it uncomfortable for him to stay in Basle, but where to go he was at a loss to decide. Writing to his friend Pirckheimer, who had ventured to give him counsel in his difficulties, he says:

> I can easily take in good part what you tell me of Oecolampadius' affair, providing you approve of my keeping quiet in his regard. I had started to take some action in that matter, but I straightway felt that I could accomplish nothing other than to excite disturbance here where things are festering too much as it is. Moreover, I am meditating flight, but I see no place to go. The childish monks have created so much tumult in Spain that neither the authority of Cæsar nor that of the archbishops is of any avail to quell it. At Paris, under the leadership of Bedda, certain theologians are pushing things to extremes. At Louvain, he who is the head of all this system of torture is said to be a dire enemy to me, as he is to all good men. The king and the Archbishop of Canterbury invite me most lovingly to England; but there are many circumstances which deter me from seeking that island. But what need of any such deliberation when my health will not permit of any migration, and with difficulty I sustain life at home . . .?[5]

We need not take too literally the above statements about his feeble health, for he was yet only sixty-two; and though he suffered frequent and painful attacks of the gravel, like all people subject to that disease, he was comparatively well in the intervals. Nor need we accept too literally his statement about Louvain being headquarters for his persecutors; since in another letter to his friend Nicholas Marvillanus, president of the College of the Three Languages at Louvain, he writes: "I know not how mute are the monks in your vicinity [Louvain]; they are noisy enough in Spain; nor is there any lack of them in other places, who are brawling and prating, especially some discalced Carmelites, but what is goading them on I know not."[6] From this we may infer that Louvain was quiet enough even to suit Erasmus, and yet the neurasthenic element in him was disturbed thereat.

At no former period of his life was he in such tribulation as at the present moment. He felt that his residence at Basle was no longer tenable, and yet in all Europe there was no other place which offered him a suitable, safe, and satisfactory abode. He was hated by Luther and the extremists of his party, detested by the monks upon whom he had poured out all the virulence and bitterness of his nature; besides this, his orthodoxy was suspected by the Catholic theologians, and his heterodoxy by the Reformers. But great as was the hatred that he had drawn down upon himself almost everywhere else, it was reserved for Spain to make the most public demonstrations of the fact. He saw the storm coming from the moment when he heard that his *Enchiridion* had been turned into Spanish, and he immediately appealed to the friendship and protection of such powerful men as Alfonzo de Valdés,

[4] *Ibid.*, col. 1057F. (January 3, 1528.)
[5] *Ibid.*, col. 1139A-B. (Early in 1528.)
[6] Eras. Ep. (H) p. 671.

WILLIBALD PIRCKHEIMER

Dürer

Latin secretary to the Emperor Charles, Don Alfonzo Manrique, Cardinal Archbishop of Seville and Inquisitor General, Mercurino Gattinara, Imperial Chancellor, and others of like calibre. He sent a letter to a Spanish friend named Dr. Luis Nuñez Coronel, in which he discouraged any further translations of his works into Spanish, saying: "I do not know whether they who translate my books into Spanish do it from love of me; but this I do know, they excite much ill will against me." [7]

This utterance of Erasmus was shown to Alfonzo Fernandez, Archdeacon of Alcor, who was the translator of the *Enchiridion* into Spanish, though that fact was unknown to Erasmus. Immediately he made himself known to Erasmus, and wrote him, saying:

> . . . Up to this time I have seen no book of yours done into Spanish, save only the *Enchiridion militis christiani* by myself, which all concur in saying has not been discreditably translated. This work has gained so much applause, brought so much credit to your name, and proved so useful to Christian people that there is no other book of our time that may be compared with the *Enchiridion* for the extent of its circulation, since it is found in the hands of everybody. There is scarcely an individual in the court of the Emperor, an inhabitant in our cities, a member of our churches and convents, nay, not even a hotel or country inn, that has not a copy of the *Enchiridion* of Erasmus in Spanish. The Latin version was read previously by a few who understood the Latin language, but its full merit was not perfectly perceived even by these; now the Spanish version is read by all without distinction, and this short work has made the name of Erasmus a household word in circles where hitherto it had been unknown and unheard of. . . . But enough of this. Now, for the love I bear you, I judge it right to suggest that you introduce into your little book called the *Exomologesis* at least some small compliment to Auricular Confession, and that you should commend it with somewhat more earnestness, in order that the above-mentioned work, which is now agreeably received by all good and learned men, may, with this suggested addition, be satisfactory to the unlearned who now speak ill of it. Farewell, you personally reflect honor on letters. Palencia, November 27, 1527. Erasmus, I am, with much jealousy for your reputation, Alfonzo Fernandez, Archdeacon of Alcor.[8]

The work of Erasmus to which this correspondent refers was the *Exomologesis siue Modus confitendi,* which he had published in 1524, and which, even to the partial eye of this admirer of the great writer, was evidently far from satisfactory. Fernandez wished to point out at least one reason why this book in particular was exciting ill will against Erasmus on the part of the Spaniards. And he spoke *ex cathedra* in a way, for he was a professor of theology and consequently

[7] See Eras. Ep. (LB) col. 1723B.

[8] See *Life and Writings of Juan Valdés,* pp. 41-2, from which this translation is paraphrased. London, 1865.

as well able as Erasmus to judge of what was the accepted teaching of the Church on the matter of Auricular Confession. Now, when even the comparatively mild *Exomologesis* was disturbing Spain so much, Erasmus must have been in a very perturbed state of mind when he reflected on his far more reprehensible *Praise of Folly* and the *Colloquies;* so he hastened to ward off the imminent peril of having them translated into Spanish, as it now appeared probable that such an event would shortly take place unless he could by some means prevent it. So he wrote to Fernandez, the writer of the above letter, who had so ably accomplished the Spanish version of the *Enchiridion,* and very deftly and sagaciously sought to guide his enthusiasm:

> . . . I had heard from the letters of many friends that my *Enchiridion* had been elegantly translated into Spanish, but from your letter I have for the first time learned to whom I am indebted for the favor. I am very much gratified on this account that a man of your ability has deigned to spend such pains on my little work. Would that it might turn out as useful as both of us wish, for then I should not regret the hostility that is wont to result from everything good. If your letter and those of my friends are telling the truth, not only do I not regret your endeavor, but I am even rejoiced and full of gratitude towards you, not for the celebrity of my name for which, you write, you are working, since I should prefer to be the most obscure of all men rather than to have a reputation leavened by the ferment of dislike, . . . but out of regard for piety. And, since you have succeeded so well with this one, I should wish . . . that certain others of my works might be turned into Spanish, at least those which seem to lead to piety. Of such nature I deem to be my little *Commentaries on the Four Psalms,* on *The Mercy of the Lord, On Christian Marriage,* my *Paraphrases,* and such like works, which can be made by a suitable translation to assist the morals of mankind. For herein also the tact of the translator is of much importance, since I have written some works to stimulate study, some for correcting the judgments of the multitude, and many that are to be read only by the learned. I know nothing about you except what I have just mentioned; yet the rumor is prevalent here, from letters and conversations of some people, that my *Colloquies,* my *Lingua,* and I know not what others, are being printed there [in Spain], and although there is nothing impious in them, as far as I know, yet each work has its own time and place. . . . What you advise with reference to my *Exomologesis* I will do on the very earliest occasion, although I have already done it many times, both before the work was issued, and afterwards. Men do not consider what I had undertaken to treat of in that work, nor for whom it was written, nor the time nor place. What is the good of an appendix if it is not read, or if it is only read for the purpose of being misrepresented? What is going on there in your locality I know not, but here the work has helped more than the writings of other people who claim to advocate Confession most earnestly. I

shall take your advice, however; and may the Lord prosper you in all your undertakings. Basle, March 15, 1528.[9]

Had Erasmus himself made the selection, he could hardly have selected a better champion for his cause than this same Alfonzo Fernandez. There is a letter in existence at Leipzig written by him in the previous year to Dr. Coronel, secretary of the Inquisitor-General of Spain, who was Alfonzo Manrique, Archbishop of Seville. This letter describes the sayings and doings of a Franciscan monk, Father Juan de San Vicente, who had openly attacked in his sermons some of the works of Erasmus, including therein the *Enchiridion,* the *Paraclesis,* and some others. He accused Erasmus of uttering therein many heresies, which so wrought on Fernandez that he met him in public debate, and, as his crowning argument, showed to the audience the Archbishop's *Imprimatur,* which effectually put Father Vicente in the wrong. Then he tells us something which leads us to realize that human nature has not changed much in four hundred years, inasmuch as he declares that the opposition to the works of Erasmus only served to cause them to be read all the more. But we will let the letter speak for itself:

> . . . But he has not ceased to bark yet, nor does he desist from forcing his way into the houses of influential laymen, publicly exciting everyone against Erasmus, and, secretly, against the authority of the Archbishop and of the lords of the Council, concerning whom he has dared to say that they erred in their approval of the book, and in their order to have it printed. True it is that we all enjoy forbidden fruit; for the Father has succeeded so well that those who never heard of Erasmus before are now seen with his books in their hands constantly, and nothing is read other than the *Enchiridion,* since it has thus been condemned and defamed by the reverend Father. . . . It . . . affects His Grace and the lords of the Council, that a half idiotic and unimportant monk has dared to condemn as a heretic one of whom the protectors of the Church approve as a good man; it affects yourself no less, for it was upon your evidence and commendation that the book was approved and printed. And assuredly, if this fellow shall calumniate the *Praise of Folly* or some of the youthful *Colloquies,* though this would have been a great hardihood on his part, still it might have been borne; but to have spoken so vehemently against the *Enchiridion,* never before attacked by anyone up to this present day, is unpardonable. I write to ask you to apprise the Archbishop and those lords, in order that His Grace may order him to be chastised, so that, at least, he may be made to retract in that very pulpit, and reinstate those whom he has defamed, etc. . . .[10]

But the Archbishop, in his capacity as Inquisitor-General, seems to have been a very just and discreet man; and, although he was friendly to Erasmus, he felt that he could do no less in the circumstances than

[9] Eras. Ep. (H) pp. 669-70.

[10] See *Life and Writings of Juan Valdés,* pp. 39-40, from which this translation is paraphrased.

to have the books of Erasmus examined. Very wisely he made his selection of examiners from the very highest and most learned men that Spain could then produce, the mention of whose names is a sufficient guarantee of their abilities. The commission consisted of thirty-two, among whom were Alonzo de Cordoba, D.D., who was an Augustinian of the Sorbonne, also a professor at Salamanca, and the author of various works; Alfonzo de Oropesa, professor at Salamanca and an author of standing; Juan Martinez Sillico, a famous theologian of Salamanca, a scholar of the Upper College of St. Bartholomew and an author of note; Pedro de Lerma, Doctor of the Sorbonne and writer, first Chancellor of the University of Alcalá, and afterwards professor at Paris, to which he returned in order to escape the dungeons of the Inquisition; Pedro Ciruelo, Doctor of the Sorbonne, scholar of the Upper College of St. Ildefonzo of Alcalá and author of repute; Alonzo Virues, a Benedictine monk and a writer of various works, afterwards Bishop of the Canary Islands, who himself suffered much at the hands of the Inquisition; Dionisio Vazquez, an Augustinian monk who was also a Doctor of the Sorbonne, professor at the University of Alcalá, and chaplain to the Pope, but so humble that he declined the appointments of Archbishop of Mexico and of Bishop of Palencia; Nicholas Castillo, a Franciscan monk, author of a volume of sermons; Luis Nuñez Coronel, like Erasmus a scholar of the College of Montaigu at Paris, professor at the Sorbonne, chaplain to Charles V, and, in the opinion of Erasmus as it appears in his *Paraphrase on St. Matthew,* a consummate theologian; Miguel Carrasco, a Doctor of Alcalá, a scholar of the Upper College of St. Idelfonzo, and at that time a confessor of the Archbishop of Toledo; Luis Cabeza de Vaca, formerly tutor to Charles V, and now Bishop of the Canary Islands; and many others. The good old Archbishop Manrique, as Inquisitor-General, presided *ex officio* over the commission, and we can easily see from the personnel of the commission that he had taken every possible care to safeguard the interests of Erasmus.[11] Those of the commission who were monks were certainly well equipped by scholarship to maintain whichever side of the argument appealed to them; and if they gravitated to the side opposed to Erasmus, which we do not know, it would have been only quite natural under the circumstances. Here were to be passed upon the works of a man who had described the monks as gluttons, who had stated that the monastic institution was a bad one, turning out as it did men who were worldlings, unchaste, irreligious, and ignorant, besides other charges which will recur to the reader without repetition here. But the charge that they most resented was that they were opposed to learning. And now he was to be tried by a commission upon which sat some of the most learned theologians of Spain, and, strange to say, many of these learned theologians were monks of the various Religious Orders. Not only that, but, as theologians, they far outranked Erasmus himself, while most of them were authors of books which had made some stir in the world. It is possible that one or two of them did not know Hebrew any more

[11] See Llorente's *Historia de la Inquisición,* Vol. III, chap. xiii. Barcelona, 1835.

than Erasmus, but they certainly knew Greek, Latin, and other tongues, for, by the assiduous labors of some of them, Cardinal Ximenes had been able to issue his Bible in the three languages as a gift to the whole Christian world. The friends of Erasmus on the commission worked valiantly in his behalf, and even Erasmus himself had recourse to what might be by some considered sharp practice. By this we mean that he tried to influence both the Emperor and the Pope to intervene directly, without waiting the issue of the commission's report. And in this way. He wrote to the Chancellor of the Emperor, Mercurino Gattinara, as follows:

> Most accomplished Sir. Your constant and generous regard for me I was long ago aware of, although you are day by day making it more manifest to me how greatly you cherish the highest learning and Christian piety, in the promoting and fostering of which I shall assuredly evince a firm and sincere mind, even if nothing else, to my last breath. . . . What Spain will permit Lee to do I know not; but this I do know, that he is going to get into disfavor with his king, with the Cardinal of York, and with numberless other bishops, nobles, and learned men in England. . . . I am enclosing to you a fragment of a letter from Cuthbert Tunstall, who was Lee's predecessor in his present office, from which you may the more readily believe what I say. I fervently approve of your edict to check the audacity of the press; but this has to be provided for, that this very good law may not be turned to a very bad purpose, as begins to be the case at Paris. . . . But your most vigilant prudence, combined with that of the Archbishops of Toledo and Seville, will see to it especially that nothing like this may be permitted to anyone in Spain. . . . Farewell, mighty patron, to yourself and to the best of Emperors. Basle, April 29, 1527.[12]

The commission had not yet begun its sittings, but Gattinara, acting on the above hint from Erasmus, thought he would take time by the forelock; he immediately wrote to Juan Perez, the Emperor's chargé d'affaires at Rome, to procure a Brief from the Pope in Erasmus' favor. This, if obtained, would naturally render the Archbishop's commission unnecessary. Perez lost no time in executing the task entrusted to him, for on June 26, 1527, he writes back:

> I asked the Pope for a brief to the Archbishop of Seville . . . that should impose silence on those who attacked the works of Erasmus; for the Grand Chancellor, Mercurino de Gattinara, had written to me to do so at the time of his departure, and his Holiness instructed me that I should ask it by form of a memorial to Cardinal Santicuatro, which I did. I shall press for it, and if the brief be obtained, I shall send it to Secretary Alfonzo Valdés, to whom the Grand Chancellor desired that I should transmit it.[13]

[12] Eras. Ep. (LB) vol. 974A-975B.
[13] See *Life and Writings of Juan Valdés*, p. 43.

He was successful, as he records in the following extract from a letter dated August 1st of the same year:

> Herewith I transmit to the Secretary Valdés the Brief which I advised your Majesty should be sent to the Archbishop of Seville, imposing silence, under pain of excommunication, upon those who should speak against the works of Erasmus, forasmuch as they contradict those of Luther.[14]

Whether Pope Clement, in giving the Brief, was a free agent or not is questionable. The Emperor and the Pope were at war during this time, and the Constable of Bourbon, leading the Imperial troops, had sacked the Holy City on May 8th, forcing Clement to fly to the Castle of San Angelo, where he was besieged for an entire month, until on June 5th he was forced to capitulate, yield up the fortress, and throw himself on the Emperor's mercy. It was on this occasion that Pope Clement, finding his fortunes past all hope of recovery, bade Benvenuto Cellini to melt down his tiara, the emblem of his pontifical authority, thereby indicating that he was only a puppet in the hands of the Emperor. And this was the moment chosen by Perez, the Emperor's representative, to request from the crushed and humiliated Pontiff the Brief in favor of Erasmus. So once more Erasmus scored heavily on the monks, but it is doubtful that the latter knew how the dice were loaded against them. On receipt of the mandatory Brief, the Archbishop of Seville dismissed his commission on the pretext of danger to the members from the prevailing pestilence. These men, however, seem not to have remained supine under the indignity to which they had been subjected, and not only commented publicly on the matter, but also evidently made known to the Emperor what had been put through under his authority. Erasmus then felt obliged to reply to their animadversions, especially since the Emperor seemed to be displeased. He had to obtain permission from the Archbishop to print this reply,[15] and thus addressed him:

> Reverend Prelate. I send my reply, which, though printed, has not been issued, until your authority shall decide otherwise, in case you deem it wise to permit me its publication within your jurisdiction. I saw a few copies of it through the press for the use of those who had been selected to judge of its merits, because I was short of the necessary number of copyists. In place then of so great a number of amanuenses, I have made use of a printed copy. I cannot ever imagine what has possessed the minds of those people that they must make themselves obnoxious to my labors and to what concerns your Lordship, for reasons of such a character, thereby disturbing Christian tranquillity. They could not in any way more defame themselves. A few days ago I wrote at greater length to you, and I suppose that my letter has already reached you, since I sent it in duplicate. I must also express my surprise that the

[14] *Ibid.*, p. 44.

[15] *Desiderij Erasmi Apologia aduersus articulos aliquot, per monachos quosdam in Hispaniis exhibitos,* in LB col. 1018 *sqq.*

> Emperor, in place of active kindness, now all but permits me to be thrown to the wild beasts, since, relying on his authority, I have exposed myself to every danger. Depending on him, I felt I ought not to fear a faction which is really to be dreaded; and now, after I have exposed myself to danger in opposing them, the Emperor has begun to fear them, so that they are not at all afraid of him. However, I will not cease to do what comports with a Christian man, and your Lordship will perform whatever seems to you especially conducive to Christian piety. I pray for you every felicity in Christ, and dedicate myself entirely to that same purpose. I am unable to express in words with what regret I behold the enmities of kings again increasing, for it is uncertain how they will end. I recognize that it is the divine wrath that is raging against us by the agency of these royal quarrels, but still we fail to recover our senses. This matter gives me much more anxiety than the stupid commotions of the monks. May the Lord turn it all to a good end! Basle, October 15, 1527.[16]

Thus conditions in Spain resembled very much those in France, and clearly showed him that his standing in the former country was no better than in the latter. How many times he had had to realize that his contemptuous references to the monks had embittered his life, and all to no purpose! He was not great enough to disregard them, but continued to complain of them to the Emperor, to the bishops, and to all his friends who were not monks. They would not hearken to him when he tried to win them to his doctrine of expediency. That he openly advocated meeting the partisans of Luther on some common ground was not listened to by them; while his plan of paring down the doctrines and practices of the Church until they should meet the approval of Melancthon and others of the more moderate reformers filled them with disgust. And the fear that he might, with his great reputation and his convincing manner of presenting his opinions, succeed in impressing the multitude with the idea that they had hitherto been deceived, and that their formal manner of addressing the Deity was only superstition and false devotion, made them all the more determined to defeat at any cost what they sincerely considered a desperate attempt by an erratic man to unhinge the beliefs of all Christian people. And that this process of paring down what offended the Lutheran Evangelicals was in his mind is very evident from a letter which he sent for the purpose to Hermann, Archbishop of Cologne, who, by virtue of his rank as an Elector of the Empire and Duke of Westphalia and Hungary, was in a position to bring about such an accommodation with the Evangelicals if the idea appealed to him. A part of the letter is here given:

> . . . It is not necessary to inquire into everything, much less to pronounce upon it. It is enough to treat of those matters which properly make for Gospel teaching. The world has certain laws of its own, and the Schools have their methods. Now let nothing be

[16] Eras. Ep. (H) p. 750.

taught to the people but what is undeniable, what is necessary to faith, and what is conducive to piety of life. I may instance that some emphasize too much the necessity of Confession; while others, on the contrary, do away with it entirely, although there is perhaps a happy medium between both views. Again, some have made the Mass of such importance that it has become the source of income for priests who are almost unlearned and sordid, mere Mass-mongers as it were, and the mainstay of evil-living men; while others would completely abolish the Mass. Now here is a place for moderation, so that we might have a more sacred and a purer Mass, instead of none at all. In the same way, some, by their excessive and superstitious regard for the saints, almost overshadow their worship of Christ; while others, on the contrary, set down all respect for the saints as impious. Some strive to overthrow completely every condition of monks; while others attribute more than is proper to human constitutions, ceremonies, titles, and kinds of habits. In these and other matters it might be easily brought about by some prudent person that we would hold to the dogmas of our faith better and with more surety, that Confession might be more sincere and less anxious, that the Mass might be more sacred and venerated, and that we might have priests and monks, if fewer, certainly better.[17]

Though the Archbishop answered him kindly enough, his reply seems to lend itself to the usual platitudes of courtesy, and manifests no evident disposition to concur in the measures proposed by Erasmus to conciliate the Evangelicals. Strangely enough, it was about this time that he changed the teaching which he had hitherto maintained, that the monks were solely responsible for the decline of learning. From this time forward he began to lay the blame on the followers of Luther, expressing himself in these words:

I abhor the Evangelicals for various reasons, one of which is that it is through them that literature is declining in every place, being entertained with coldness and contempt so that now it is on the point of perishing. And without literature what is life? They love money and women, and despise other things. We have been deafened long enough with the cry of the Gospel, the Gospel, the Gospel! We need the morality of the Gospel.[18]

As we have before intimated, conditions for his continued residence at Basle were now becoming dubious; for, although neither the Catholic nor the Protestant party had as yet achieved a commanding ascendancy and the learned men of both sides were so far well disposed to him, yet he knew not what disturbing element might at any moment arise to make that city untenable for him. His desire from this time on was to avoid trouble if possible, and he tried to bridle his tongue. But it

[17] Eras. Ep. (LB) col. 1068E-1069A.
[18] Eras. Ep. (H) p. 671.

was a task beyond his strength. Let us give one disastrous instance. An unpardonably flippant remark of his had angered Oecolampadius, the nature of which we glean from Erasmus' letter to Adrianus a Rivulo, where he writes:

> . . . Recently Oecolampadius has married a wife, a girl not without claims to beauty. He wishes to mortify the flesh, I suppose. Some people call this the Lutheran tragedy, but to me it seems to be a comedy, for all these tumults are ending in marriages.[19]

This was as offensive as it was unnecessary. It is possible that Oecolampadius was more sincere in what he believed than was Erasmus. In any case, he was too great a thinker to be silenced by a witticism. When he had first arrived at Basle he had found that city a seat of culture and erudition where Erasmus had lived for several years surrounded by an admiring circle of scholars from its University, of whom Louis Ber and Uttenheim, its bishop, were shining lights, while the University was the defender of the Catholic faith and traditions. Into this circle came Oecolampadius, a distinguished scholar and theologian, who had just refused a professorship in the University of Ingolstadt; and in a very short time he had divided the attention and admiration of the circle with Erasmus. We need not dilate on the manner in which Erasmus had become affected towards him in consequence, for the reader knows how sensitive are all literary men in such matters. Perhaps the presence of Oecolampadius at Basle openly advocating the teachings of Luther, and even passing far beyond the limitations set down by the arch-reformer, had as much to do with definitely sending Erasmus into the Catholic camp as anything else. When Oecolampadius had been appointed to lecture on the Scriptures in the University of Basle by the city council and in spite of the University officials, he delivered some lectures which greatly displeased Erasmus; and the final result of his work was to win that city over to the Reformation, and thus make it an unsuitable place of residence for Erasmus any longer. So, from this time on, he began to look around for some place where he would not be obliged to seem to identify himself with the Lutheran party, and where he could be the sole and only shining light. Such a place under present conditions was hard to find, but he bided his time. We who know from his correspondence that he had definitely broken with the Lutheran party once and for all see that it was unjust on the part of his enemies to keep stabbing him with this charge of Lutheranism; and we cannot withhold from him, under the circumstances, a measure of our sympathy. But he had long known the truth of Horace's remark that a word once spoken can never be recalled, and those words of his which gave such offense were not only spoken but printed. He had the poor taste to include that letter quoted above, containing his crude and unnecessary witticism on Oecolampadius' marriage. in an edition of his letters which he himself issued in 1529. What he had said was known to the world, but what he desired to unsay was known

[19] Eras. Ep. (LB) col. 1071E.

to very few. Hence his impotent anger at seeing himself misrepresented at a time when it was so important for his interests that he should stand well with all who were opposed to Luther. Every letter from this time on is filled with protestations of loyalty to the Church and its rulers: so much so, indeed, that the thought rises unbidden in our minds that he was now at length conscious to himself of his former lukewarmness in that respect.

CHAPTER XX

THE "CICERONIANVS": FURTHER CONTROVERSIES

Leaving for the moment his futile efforts at settling on the basis of expediency the discord between the Church and the Lutherans, we shall now follow him into the discussion of another controversy, one from which he emerged undoubtedly victorious, but not without scars of battle. This was the occasion of publishing his book entitled the *Ciceronianus,* which appeared in the year 1528, dedicated to one of his friends, John Ulatenus, who was at the head of the College of Aix-la-Chapelle. The object of the book was to rebuke the Latin purists, at that time rather numerous, who would not admit into their writings any word not found in Cicero. Hence they were known as "Ciceronians." This excessive admiration for an author who was, after all, only one of the classic writers that antiquity had left behind, arbitrarily chosen, did not appear justified in the estimation of Erasmus: he accordingly wrote his *Ciceronianus* for the purpose of strongly expressing his own views on the subject. Like his *Antibarbari* and his *Colloquies,* he cast this production in the form of a dialogue wherein each speaker gave utterance to his views. There were three characters: Nosoponus, whose name may be interpreted "one who labors under a contagious distemper"—*id est,* Ciceronianism; Bulephorus, which name may be translated "counselor"; and Hypologus, that is, "the ponderer." Nosoponus, who for seven years has read nothing but Cicero, is so exacting that he would regard it as a moral offense to use any word unsanctioned by his hero; and states that, for his own part, he would rather be a true disciple of Cicero in this respect than to be a Pope or a canonized saint. Bulephorus, as his name implies, is more moderate: while entertaining due admiration for Cicero, he is not blind to the extravagances that such a slavish copying of the great orator would entail. He makes a good argument out of the fact that many of Cicero's works are lost to us, in which it is reasonable to suppose that he employed a more extended vocabulary. He also shows that Cicero's choice of subjects must necessarily have limited to some extent the variety of his words. He points out, what is very true, that, if Latin should now be confined to what words are to be found only in Cicero, it would be impossible for the theologians to express their meaning in pure Ciceronian Latin, since that language would not then furnish the requisite terminology. Hypologus the ponderer, after having reflected on the acute reasoning of Bulephorus, admits that he is convinced, and even Nosoponus shows signs of being somewhat shaken in his belief. The work reads admirably and shows Erasmus' knowledge of the classics to great advantage. Had he chosen

to stop at this point, the Ciceronians would have been absolutely confuted. But, unfortunately for his peace of mind, he felt called upon to institute comparisons between the merits of many living authors who had written in the Latin tongue. This was fiercely resented by those who suffered from such comparisons. But it was particularly in France that this work made enemies for him. For instance, for some reason which has never yet been elucidated, he took Budé, undoubtedly the greatest scholar and Latinist of that country, and chose to compare him with Josse Badius Ascensius, a Parisian bookseller of note, whose Latin was quite good, but whose writings in that language had never attracted much attention. Now, if he had chosen Christopher Longolius with whom to compare Budé, there would have been some fitness in the selection, since even the Italian writers, who would not acknowledge that there was any Latin author of note outside of Italy, had been forced to admire that talented writer's style and grace in the classic tongue of ancient Rome. But, although we have not learned the reason for this invidious comparison of Badius with Budé, there was without doubt a good one, and the temptation is strong in us to look for such a reason in the strained relations which had existed between Budé and Erasmus for two or three years back. We know that Erasmus never hesitated to gratify his vindictiveness whenever he could safely do so; and we have already pointed out numerous examples of this in his *Enchiridion,* his *Praise of Folly,* and his *Colloquies.* In our task of reading Erasmus' letters, we are struck with the fact that Budé is the only one of all his correspondents who assumes with him a position of learned and literary equality, and at times even arrogates to himself an unexpressed but well-felt superiority over his Dutch confrère. We seek in vain for the expressions of admiration and high appreciation of Erasmus' work that are so evident in the letters of his other correspondents, and which were as incense in his nostrils. Little of such appears in any letter of Budé, but there do appear frequently both advice and criticism, as of a man who felt that his own attainments gave him the right to advise and counsel a fellow-writer's work. There is no doubt that in the matter of Greek the French scholar was Erasmus' superior, and, as even competition was not well borne by the Dutch scholar, it must follow that Budé's unreserved efforts to impress Erasmus with his superior attainments were ill brooked by the latter. This may or may not have been his reason for seeming to belittle Budé by the above-mentioned comparison; be that as it may, the result was to infuriate the friends of the great French scholar, though he himself at first seemed to make little of the matter, possibly understanding the underlying motive. But, yielding to the urgencies of his friends, especially to those of Jacques Tussan, he at last admitted that he had much reason to complain of the ill office that Erasmus had done him, particularly as some of them insisted to him that the comparing of him to Badius was like comparing Achilles to Thersites. Erasmus was lampooned by some and subjected to ridicule by others. John Lascaris came to the aid of Budé with some epigrams against Erasmus, and Tussan, hitherto a staunch admirer, felt inspired by the circumstances to assail him in a very offensive distich:

Desine mirari quare postponat Erasmus
Budæum Badio; plus fauet ille pari.[1]

This distich nettled Erasmus very much, and he hastened to upbraid Tussan for it:

> I am at a loss to know what you mean by your verses, which not only are unworthy of both you and me, but also are pernicious to the cause of learning for which we are both laboring. It would have become you better to display your accomplishments against those pertinacious enemies of the Muses. Never, of a surety, have you been injured by me in word or deed, nor will I grant that you further the fame of Budé more fervently than I do, so far it is from my desire even to envy him, or to throw him down from that height of glory which he deservedly occupies. I wished to warn you, my dear Tussan, not so much on my own account as on that of studies, and even for the sake of Budé, on whose head such verses will bring enmity from people who esteem me. We are not all Beddas yet, so, I pray you, permit Budé to be esteemed by everybody. Although I know that such a grave and upright man as he will not take pleasure in such a pasquinade as that of yours, yet there will not be wanting others who may think differently. Farewell. Basle, March 18, 1529.[2]

This was short and to the point, and gave Tussan food for reflection. He had always had a high regard for Erasmus, and this impelled him to set himself right with him, for which purpose he asked their mutual friend Germain de Brie to explain to Erasmus that this distich had escaped from his hands in a moment of anger and without due consideration. His pardon was eventually and gracefully granted by Erasmus. But to show how the French court, and the scholars of that country generally, stood affected towards the author of the invidious and unhappy comparison, we shall give the opening of a letter which he received from this his own especial friend Germain de Brie:

> . . . I come to that part of your letter which, pertaining as it does to yourself in a special manner, bears a common relation to us both. For, on account of the rights of our friendship, I cannot help but become at once a sharer of whatever affects its standing, whether that be good or bad. Now I would particularly desire, dearest Erasmus, and I can address you by no more sacred title, that especially at this particular time, which is hostile enough to learning for other reasons, no slightest cloud should arise by which the brightness of your friendship for Budé might be obscured. Budé, as you know, is so admired by us all that we who love learning regard him as something sacred. It is not alone the trustworthiness, the integrity, and the influence of the man that has brought this about, but also his years, his genius, and his learning, which is such that there is nothing worth acquiring that he cannot teach one. To me

[1] "Do not wonder why Erasmus prefers Badius to Budé; he is only favoring the one who is most like himself."
[2] Eras. Ep. (LB) col. 1163E-F.

> he is certainly what Aristo was to his friend Pliny, and always has been, for as often as I seek to ascertain something which is obscure to me, Budé is my treasury of knowledge; and, to put the matter succinctly, Budé is to his fellow Frenchmen what Erasmus is to his fellow Germans. Hence the greater is the indignation that possesses the minds of all our people, being of the opinion, and justly, that you have not only compared Budé with Badius, but have even esteemed the latter more highly.[3]

Erasmus was certainly in a hole here, but he replied to his friend's letter with consummate ability, and, after stating in a hundred different ways that they were wrong who accused him of the slightest desire to lessen the fame of Budé, says that he feels that he has not convinced his friend and agrees to accept his suggestion to omit the offending comparison in the next edition of the work.

So, too, in Italy, the *Ciceronianus* gave great offense, and for very natural reasons. Italy was in a sense the home of the Latin tongue, and the Italians, with some color of justice, had considered themselves its guardians. They had courteously admitted the skill and dexterity of Erasmus, Budé, and Longolius in that classic language, but their attitude in the matter was somewhat patronizing. Under such circumstances we can readily conceive of their astonishment and resentment in reading the *Ciceronianus,* wherein Erasmus had had the audacity to criticize their use of the language of their ancestors. That he, a barbarian, as they were accustomed to style the northern peoples, should dare to set himself up as a censor and critic on a subject concerning which neither his birth nor his training warranted him to speak was unheard of. And he had not only accused them of being purists, but, worse still, he had asserted that many of the youth of Italy had become imbued with the paganism of Cicero's age. He gives no proof of this charge, nor does he mention any names in support thereof, but leaves it as indefinite as possible. In a letter to Francisco Vergara, professor of Greek at the University of Alcalá, he is more explicit in his charges, but refrains from naming any particular offenders:

> . . . There is also that species of enemies who have lately begun to spring out of ambush. They feel put out that good literature should treat of Christ, as if nothing could be elegant but what is pagan. To their ears Jupiter Best and Greatest sounds better than Jesus Christ the Redeemer of the world, and Conscript Fathers than the Holy Apostles. They extol with praise Pontanus to the skies, while they turn up their noses at Augustine and Jerome. But I would rather have one ode of Prudentius hymning Jesus than a whole shipload of the poems of Pontanus, whose learning and eloquence in other directions I do not at all despise. Among these people it is almost more disgraceful not to be a Ciceronian than not to be a Christian, just as if, were Cicero now alive, he would not speak differently about Christian matters than he did in his own day, when it was the main part of eloquence to speak to the point

[3] Eras. Ep. (H) p. 899.

> at issue. No one denies that Cicero excelled in the art of speaking, although not every kind of eloquence is suitable to particular persons or subjects. What means this odious boasting about the term *Ciceronian?* Let me whisper what I think about it in a few words. Under this pretense they hide their paganism, which is dearer to them than the glory of Christ. It will not much grieve me to be blotted from the list of *Ciceronians,* provided I shall be inscribed in the ranks of Christians.[4]

Bembo seems to have been the greatest offender in regard to *Ciceronianism,* having even used the objectionable *Iupiter Optimus Maximus* in one of his letters to Leo X, whose secretary he was; but, as Erasmus had disarmed him by saying that it was the younger Italian scholars that were in fault, Bembo could not readily take offense. Indeed, Erasmus made great efforts not to offend this famous Italian writer, and one of his first cares on hearing of the bloody and destructive sack of Rome by the Constable of Bourbon, in which, besides the terrible loss of life, so much that was priceless in literature and art had perished, was to write to Sadoleti, inquiring about Bembo's personal safety and the fate of his library amid the prevailing ruin of the times.[5] But his charge that the Italian scholars who were Ciceronians were at heart pagans has been worked to death by modern writers, for there is no historical basis for it in our estimation. It was simply a mannerism of the day, an attempt to give to their writings the true classic ring, and had no more to do with paganism than it had to do with Confucianism. Moreover, we have amusing proof that this is so from the fact that Erasmus himself used these very mannerisms of word and phrase; so that, if the Ciceronians were pagan on that account, then so was he. In that very letter to Sadoleti to which we have just referred, he deplores the fact that two such men as Bembo and Sadoleti, who were of similar social calibre, had not been able to enjoy a similar tranquillity of life, adding, "Sed aliter visum superis," which may be translated, "But the celestial powers deemed otherwise." In the same way Lucas Palinurus writes to Erasmus, and hopes that the *powers supernal* may preserve him for learning's sake.[6] It was a manner of speech derived from antiquity, redolent of the classics certainly, but in no way indicating any tendency to paganism in the user. It was the commonest of commonplaces for Erasmus to swear by the Muses or similar divinities, after the manner of the Augustan poets.[7] As far back as 1497 he tells Batt, "I will fly to you, if the gods will only assist me."[8] And again, when he had found out that the carters were drinking his wine and filling up the casks with water on the road, he exclaims, "Now may Jupiter destroy these wine-bibbing thieves."[9]

But, as usual, retribution overtook him, this time in the person of

[4] *Ibid.,* p. 744, ll. 13-27.
[5] Eras. Ep. (LB) col. 1124C-D.
[6] *Ibid.,* col. 259D.
[7] See, for instance, Eras. Ep. 906.
[8] *Ibid.,* 91. (Similar examples are to be found in Ep. 217, 219, thrice.)
[9] Eras. Ep. (LB) col. 1517A.

Julius Cæsar Scaliger. Erasmus had stigmatized the younger set of Italian writers as being especially possessed by this objectionable aping of Cicero, both as to his style and his paganism. As a consequence, they were infuriated, which is possibly as good proof as any that they were not guilty; or, if they had yielded to the glamour of Cicero's style, they were indignant at being accused of paganism because of it. We learn from Scaliger that those of the young Italian *literati* who were most eager to repel the charge of Erasmus were Nicholas Leonico Tomeo, Peter Pomponazzo, Celius Rhodiginus, Louis Gaurio, and John Jucundus; and he even says that some of these solicited him to write against Erasmus. If he meant to imply that Leonico Tomeo was one of these, we feel that Scaliger is mistaken, for in the *Ciceronianus* Erasmus especially marks out that writer for praise:

> Leonico, ever busied in the sanctuaries of philosophy, especially in those of Plato, set himself to imitating the dialogues of Plato and Cicero and gained as much eloquence as we could expect from a philosopher; but he would not desire to be called a Ciceronian, I'm sure, for he is a man of rectitude as well as of profound learning.[10]

If Pomponazzo urged him to proceed against Erasmus it is also strange, since Pomponazzo died in 1524, while the *Ciceronianus* did not appear until 1528. He could hardly be styled a Ciceronian, moreover, since Speroni says that he knew only what Latin he had acquired from his seventh to his twelfth year.[11] Celius Rhodiginus also was several years dead when Scaliger made the doubtful statement mentioned above. Scaliger, however, went to unpardonable extremes in repelling the charges that Erasmus had made in his book. No terms of abuse could satisfy his rancor; and the only justification he offered was that, as Erasmus had dared to speak ill of others, he deserved no better treatment at their hands. Then he proceeded to assail the personal character of Erasmus, calling him a parricide, hangman, and drunkard, and ending up by styling him the real author of Lutheranism. Now Scaliger had not been mentioned at all in the *Ciceronianus,* either favorably or unfavorably, so the torrent of abuse which he poured on the head of Erasmus was entirely gratuitous. In addition to what we have here quoted, he called him a mere dealer in words and said that his works had neither matter nor manner, wit nor common sense. He accused him of corrupting pure Latinity by his faulty example, said that he was the father of lies, the scourge of his own and all other ages to come, the dishonorer of learning, and that his influence was destructive to study of every sort. This attack was so uncalled for and so outrageously crude that Erasmus, with unwonted magnanimity, decided to leave it unnoticed. But he felt it none the less, and wrote to one of his friends that not even Orestes could have written anything more insensate. Scaliger printed his work clandestinely at Paris, not that he was at all ashamed of the screed, but that he could not obtain immediate permission from the Roman court to publish it. The anonymity

[10] *Ciceronianus,* translated by Izora Scott, p. 98. New York, 1910.
[11] *Dialogo della Istoria,* Vol. II, p. 252.

of the thing aroused first the curiosity and then the suspicions of Erasmus. He had no knowledge of Scaliger, so he began casting around for the most likely person among his enemies to have thus assailed him. Bedda was the first one blamed; and it is entirely to his credit that not only did he disavow it, but insisted that it was too entirely atrocious. Then Julio Camillo, one of the old-time acquaintances of his Italian days, was charged with its authorship. But Camillo was able to clear himself from the imputation, so that at last Erasmus laid it on Aleander. We find that when Alberto Pio began to write against him, his suspicions also fell on Aleander, as he told Sadoleti and others. Aleander must have been a very patient man to have endured so much of doubt and mistrust on the part of Erasmus; for not only did he not become angered at him, but he took pains to prove to him that he had had nothing whatever to do with it, adding that he had always highly esteemed him, and would continue to do so. But in spite of this Erasmus did not believe him. It was his nature to be suspicious and distrustful, and from this unfortunate trait in his character his nearest and best friends were often the greatest sufferers, as we have many times had occasion to observe during the course of the present work. Had Aleander really desired to do him harm, he certainly had the power, as the Pope's nuncio, to bring signal disaster on the head of Erasmus; for who at that time was so vulnerable as the latter, or who had more numerous or more powerful enemies? This thought seems never to have entered his irascible mind, and we have already given it as our opinion that Aleander was a high-minded and generous friend.

But, when Scaliger learned that his precious bit of vituperation was being attributed to others, his anger knew no bounds. Immediately he made public a letter vindicating his claim to the work and, not content with this, later wrote a second pamphlet against Erasmus which was more furious than the first. The provocation for this second one came directly from Erasmus; for, although he had promised his friends not to dignify Scaliger by writing against him, he failed to guard his tongue from wagging, and made disparaging remarks about this vitriolic pamphleteer, decrying his learning and belitting his knowledge of the classics, and, worse than all, called him a common soldier. But enough of this. The virulence of these pamphlets of Scaliger was displeasing to all fair-minded people, and did neither credit to him nor harm to Erasmus.[12]

But to return to the *Ciceronianus*. This book is important to us in estimating the influence of Erasmus on his contemporaries. We are apt to believe that he made his enemies because he was the champion of a revolt within the Church against an effete ecclesiasticism, against superstition, against ceremonial, against the corruption of the clergy and

[12] While both Scaliger and Erasmus were under obligations to the della Rovere family, there is a most glaring contrast between the returns that each made to that family. See page 257 of Volume One. This must serve as a partial justification for Scaliger's attacks. His first effusion bears date of 1531, while his second, though written in 1535, was not printed until 1537, so that it did not appear until after the death of Erasmus.

the ignorance of the laity, but above and beyond all, because he was the self-appointed prophet of the Lord who was to point the finger of reprobation at the unenlightenment and immorality of the Monastic Orders. But here is a book that touches religion not at all, that is not concerned with the controversies which were then rending the heart of humanity, nor with the clashings of dogmatic opinions which might naturally be expected to cause acuteness of feelings. No, it was a book conceived on splendid lines, but killed in the execution. The dialogue was sprightly and entertaining, and it gave Erasmus full scope to display his unrivaled classical knowledge: there was scarcely an ancient author of whom he did not treat, and in the most instructive and fascinating manner. But when he came to treat of the modern authors, and to speak of the works of some still living, then the Erasmus that we know so well appeared, and his personality, colored by all his pettiness, his spitefulness, his fulsome praise for his friends, and his apparent candor but crafty obliquity towards those who had offended him, became woefully evident. The work made him a multitude of enemies, but sold hugely; and in this connection a dim suspicion crosses the mind that he knew the value of publicity in aiding the sale of his works and keeping himself in the public eye. That he was well aware of such practices on the part of others we know from his letter to Alfonzo Valdés, where he tells him about the result of the condemnation of his *Colloquies* by the University of Paris a short time previously:

> . . . A certain Colineus had printed, so they say, about twenty-four thousand copies of my *Colloquies* in the style of my *Enchiridion,* but in very nice binding. This he had done, not out of regard for me, but for the profit there was in it. Do I need to tell you what he did, loaded up as he was with the *Colloquies?* A rumor sprang up, I know not whence, but perhaps craftily spread about by the printer, that the work was about to be prohibited. The result was that this sharpened the avidity of the people to buy it.[18]

Erasmus may have had this in his mind, and so there may have been "method in his madness," though we are loath to think so.

In this connection too we must note the fact that none of the enemies caused by the publication of the *Ciceronianus* were monks, which shows that they had not quite so much of the spirit of persecution as Erasmus is wont to attribute to them when he is trying to make a point against them. Speaking generally, when he made enemies for himself he seems always to have been the aggressor; and, if they chose to retaliate, it was only what he might have to expect. And the most of his enemies were generous where principles were not at stake. Even this very Scaliger of whom we have been treating evinced the truth of this; for when Omphalius, who was a mutual friend both of Scaliger and Erasmus, represented to him the harm he was doing to a man who, whatever else his demerits might be, had deserved well of literature, Scaliger yielded to his request for peace and amity and even wrote a letter to him telling him that, in spite of all he had said about Erasmus and which he now

[18] Eras. Ep. (LB) col. 1168D.

regretted, he had nevertheless always admired him, and would now cease to be hostile to him. That he was sincere in this is shown by the fact that, when he heard of Erasmus' death, he did all in his power to repair the injustice he had done him, and even wrote an epitaph.

Scaliger was not the only writer who attacked Erasmus on account of the *Ciceronianus*. We may briefly mention here the French writer Stephen Dolet, who was not a whit less virulent and abusive than Scaliger. Although his book against Erasmus, entitled *De imitatione ciceroniana,* did not appear until 1535, it may be properly noticed and dismissed here in connection with that of Scaliger. He imitates Erasmus in throwing his work into the form of a dialogue, of which the characters are Sir Thomas More and Simon de Villeneuve. He makes More pay all the courtesies to Erasmus that their well-known friendship would naturally suggest; but when Villeneuve speaks it goes hard with our Dutch scholar, for the French writer does not hesitate to call him a buffoon and a dotard, whose works he belittles and whose style he ridicules. He insinuated that in trying to dissuade the young from adopting the style of Cicero he aimed to have them follow his. Then he goes over ground already traversed by Scaliger in animadverting on the audacity of Erasmus in daring to criticize the modern Latin writers. He will not admit that Erasmus has either wit or learning, and ends up his diatribe by calling him inconstant, a trifler, a double-dealer, a sharper, and a parasite. Violent as it was in tone, it is not altogether a loss of time to read Dolet's work, for his epithets quoted above are probably expressive of the sort of esteem in which Erasmus was generally held at Paris. Although Dolet had put his name to his work, Erasmus, as usual, jumped to the conclusion that Aleander had also some part in it; but his supposition, as in the case of Scaliger's work, was entirely wrong. This, coming to the ears of Dolet, further irritated him; and, like Scaliger, he came out with a second screed more savage than the first. He was not to be moved by the remonstrances of some of Erasmus' friends and insisted on having his say, alleging that Erasmus himself was far from being calm and cool when he wrote his *Ciceronianus.* But soon afterwards Erasmus died, and Dolet was seized with compunction. This led him to speak of Erasmus ever afterwards as the "honor of Germany, the ornament of his native land, and a scholar who was the peer of all who were most illustrious in France and Italy." [14] Dolet's end was sad, for he was burnt at the stake in 1546 for atheism. The Catholics burned him, and the Protestants expressed little regret at the act, Calvin accusing him even of having despised the Gospel.[15]

While we are on the subject of the annoyances to which Erasmus was constantly exposed during these latter years, we must make mention of the trouble which was caused him by his adoption of the motto which he had engraved on his seal ring, *Cedo Nulli.* This was the ring which the young Archbishop Alexander, son of the Scottish king, had given him at their parting in Rome, as mentioned in a former chapter.

[14] De Burigni, *Vie d'Érasme,* Vol. I, p. 574.
[15] *Ibid.,* Vol. I, p. 575.

This ring, which bore the features of the god Terminus, had been used by him ever since for the purpose of sealing his letters, as was the custom in those days; and he had adopted the ancient mythological tradition that the god Terminus would yield to none, not even to Jupiter, king of the gods. Evidently this seemed to those who were not well disposed towards him to savor of arrogance, so easy is it to attribute sinister motives to those we dislike. However, it was an unfortunate choice of a device for any man to make, since it gave only too good a chance for the machinations of those whom he had offended, an opportunity of which they were not slow to avail themselves. This was especially true of his Spanish critics. Erasmus gave to his friend Alfonzo Valdés a rather fanciful explanation of the matter, which may be nevertheless quite true.

Another annoying difficulty in which he involved himself occurred in this same unhappy year of 1528. This was his acrimonious quarrel with Eppendorff, to whom he seems to have given some offense on account of his unfriendly treatment of Hutten during the latter's last weeks on earth. There had been considerable coldness ever since in consequence, as we learn from a letter of Erasmus to Goclen.[16] At length the embers which had smoldered so long broke into open flame. Henry Eppendorff, who was born in Saxony some time about the beginning of the century of which we are treating, and died in 1553, was a German writer of fair ability, as his friendship with both Erasmus and Hutten will indicate. As was customary, he frequented the various universities, taking, amongst other subjects, a course of lectures on jurisprudence from Zasius, and eventually arrived at the University of Basle, where he met Erasmus and the other scholars of that city. He had had some previous acquaintance with Erasmus on the occasion of his bringing him as a present from Duke George a mass of crude silver from the royal mines of Saxony, which circumstance might justly lead us to infer that Eppendorff was a protégé of the Duke. In thanking the latter for his gift, Erasmus took the occasion to speak highly of Eppendorff, saying that he was "a young man of remarkable natural abilities."[17] This was back in 1520, and Eppendorff had had time to mature since those days. The origin of the dislike which Eppendorff had conceived for Erasmus probably dated from the time three years before when Hutten, who was Eppendorff's friend, had been subjected to the rather shabby treatment on the part of Erasmus to which we adverted in a former chapter. Evidently he had resented Erasmus' action on that occasion, and had probably told him so. There were undoubtedly recriminations on both sides as a consequence, but the trouble might have blown over had not Eppendorff obtained possession of a letter of Erasmus to Duke George, in which his own (Eppendorff's) character was aspersed. This was disastrous to Erasmus, for Eppendorff appealed to the law. The judges were embarrassed as to the proper course to pursue, for they felt that Erasmus was too great a man and too high an ornament to their city to be treated as a criminal. So they left the decision of the case to arbitrators, choosing for that

[16] Eras. Ep. 1437. [17] *Ibid.*, 1125, l. 50.

purpose two of Erasmus' best friends, Boniface Amerbach and Beatus Rhenanus, thus assuring the utmost justice for him. Erasmus pleaded that the incriminating letter was not his, because it was not signed by him, nor in his handwriting. This answer from a man who was surrounded by amanuenses was too obviously a subterfuge for even Amerbach and Rhenanus to accept, and, on Eppendorff's insistence that reparation be made his injured character, they seem to have advised Erasmus to satisfy him and thus to get out of the difficulty as gracefully as might be. He was forced to assent, and the arbitrators proceeded to sound Eppendorff as to terms. The latter must certainly have had Erasmus on the hip, and must have been well aware that the terms he proposed were most humiliating. They were these: first, that Erasmus was to dedicate to him some work for the rehabilitating of his literary reputation; second, that Erasmus should write a letter to Duke George undoing the harm he had done him in that quarter; and last, that he must donate three hundred ducats to the poor of the city of Basle. He accepted the first two demands, but resisted vigorously the one mulcting his pocket. The arbitrators thereupon labored with Eppendorff to abate somewhat from this last, to which he consented, and the three hundred ducats were reduced to twenty francs. Erasmus' dedication had to be submitted to Eppendorff before being printed, and the letter to Duke George had to be handed over to him unsealed. This was followed by a personal meeting, at which they embraced and pledged friendship for the future. But both were indiscreet in their utterances, Erasmus writing to his friends an account of the affair which was somewhat colored and intended to save his dignity. Thereupon Eppendorff gave out the real facts, and boasted that he had humbled the pride of the great man. Mutual invectives followed, and Eppendorff gave vent to his feelings at great length in a book which he issued against Erasmus in 1531. Like others of Erasmus' troubles, this was caused by a too free use of his tongue. No man could tolerate the things which he had said about Eppendorff in his letters to others, as, for instance, that he was a liar, a gambler, a debauché, a man of insolent nature and great vanity, besides other things which were injurious insinuations. Whether or not Eppendorff was all that Erasmus says he was, it was bad judgment on the latter's part to advertise the fact among their mutual friends. Eppendorff was no mean antagonist, and has left much work by which we can estimate him.[18] Although Erasmus' judgment in such matters never seems to have been of the best, it is apparent that, as he advanced in years, and sickness served to make him more petulant and inconsiderate of the rights of others, the better qualities of his character were not able to stay him from more or less important acts of deceit, dissimulation, and injustice. But we will not dwell longer on this phase, since it must be as patent to our readers as to ourselves. We must not

[18] He wrote *Wise and Witty Sentences from Plutarch,* besides a *Compendium of the German Historians;* also a translation of the fifth to the twelfth book of Pliny's *Natural History,* the *Danish Chronicle of Albert Krantz of Hamburg,* the *Arrival, War, and Conduct of the Turks,* and the *Mirror of Virtue.* Those who would know more about this quarrel may consult LB. Vol. III, col. 1076*sqq.*

pass from this year 1528 without noting the fact that an old acquaintance and very earnest admirer of Erasmus died on April sixth of this same year; we allude to the famous painter Albrecht Dürer. Their friendship was of some years' standing, for in his *Journal,* written during his travels through the Netherlands in 1520, Dürer says that he met Erasmus often, the first time at Antwerp, which occasion he commemorates in his *Journal* by saying, "Erasmus has given me a Spanish mantilla, and the portraits of three men." Later on he chronicles the fact that "I have also presented to Erasmus of Rotterdam a *Passion* engraved on copper." Again, during the same visit, and later on in the following year, he writes, "I have dined once with the Frenchman, twice with Hirschvogel, and once with Master Peter the Secretary, where Erasmus of Rotterdam was also dining." These were the times when Luther was electrifying the world by his boldness, and Dürer was one of the many men of the time who hailed his utterances with delight as those of a man who was destined to purify and reform the Church. And he notes the fact in this same *Journal* that he on that occasion exhorted Erasmus to second Luther's efforts. But after he had beheld the violence of the arch-reformer his ardor cooled considerably, and he died in the ancient Church.

It was during this year also that Erasmus wrote his famous letter to Martin Lipsius. Since this is the last time that we are to refer to the subject of his hatred of monks individually or generally, we may be pardoned for quoting this letter at some length. He goes back into the past, and gathers from his memory all the mistakes made by the monks with regard to his works, all their errors of judgment with regard to his orthodoxy, all their manifestations of ignorance with regard to the classics and the fathers. He proceeds to tell how, when he had edited his St. Jerome, some of them accused him of trying to improve the style of that father:

> . . . As if I could say anything in a more elegant manner than St. Jerome has said it, or as if I could be mad enough to think that changing his style would be worth the labor. Nor was it the common people who said this, but a Franciscan and a Dominican, and both of them bishops. . . . At Antwerp once a prior of the Carmelites was preaching in his monastery. He was a professor of theology, at least we would judge so from his violet skullcap, although otherwise he was entirely ignorant of Latin, so far was he from knowing the Sacred Scriptures. The sermon was well attended on account of its being the feast of Pentecost. After he had delivered himself of the things which he had learned from inapt smatterings of this and that, and in a manner very unlearnedly and insipidly, spying me by chance, he charged me with two sins against the Holy Ghost: the first, because I had dared to correct the *Magnificat;* and, second, because I had said that preachers might not understand their topic even when they took it from the Sacred Scriptures, even though these were inspired by the Holy Ghost; just as if there were no difference between the Holy Ghost and such a

> monk as that fellow, whom you would more properly style a block of wood than a man. You ought to have seen the smiles, not only of the learned, but also of some young women who were there, to whom I was known, for at that time I dwelt in the neighborhood.[19]

If this be a true story, then Erasmus tells it inartistically and not at all in a way to inspire credence. Why were the learned men listening to an ignorant preacher, or how did it happen that the young women understood such deep theological questions? Erasmus is certainly riding his favorite horse to death here. Also, how did a preacher who was woefully ignorant of Latin become a professor of theology; for, since that study was always taught in Latin, how could such a man perform his functions? Then again, was it so easy to obtain the degree of Doctor of Theology at Paris, Louvain, or Bologna, that any monk ignorant of Latin could acquire it? Erasmus did not find it so, Luther did not find it so, neither did Melancthon, nor Eck, nor Oecolampadius, nor a hundred others whom we might name. But to proceed:

> Very similar to him was another, who was a great theologian in the estimation of the multitude, but much more so in his own, and was considered a sturdy column of the Church. Although this man had long cried out in public against my *New Testament,* saying that the ruin of the Church was at hand, and that Antichrists had arrived with their forerunners; when, however, I had speech with him without witnesses and asked him to bring forward what had offended him in my *New Testament,* and when I had insisted that he should speak out his mind, at length the shamefaced fellow replied that he had never read my annotations. . . . Another was more modest still than this one, and even higher in rank, who, although again and again without exception he had approved my annotations as quite erudite and pious, later when I asked him why he then approved the calumnies of Lee when long since he had approved the work which he had read from head to foot, so he said, this solemn fellow replied that he had indeed read it, but not that attentively.[20]

This might very probably have happened. It is a common practice to praise books that we have never read, or have only skimmed over; and we may assume that the errors therein, if any, will be more readily detected by the hostile than by the friendly eye. Erasmus himself in almost every letter furnishes us abundant proof that it was his enemies and not his friends who ferreted out his mistakes. Then he goes on to speak about another monk whom he claims to have involved in contradictions:

> This man meditated revenge, but could not wield a facile pen; so he began to study Vergil, and Juvenal, and the "Pearl of Poesy," for the purpose of polishing his diction. For this end he enlisted three assistants, by whose labor in common a remarkable work was gotten out. He was eager to publish it, but could not obtain per-

[19] Eras. Ep. (LB) col. 1108B-D. [20] *Ibid.,* 1109A-B.

mission from a superior of his Order. At last he sent forth the asinine monstrosity secretly and under a false name. The book was a trifling affair, but you could never imagine a more ignorant, insipid, or crazy thing than it, for I counted therein seventy manifest lies, and the identity of the authors did not escape me.[21]

He brought them to trial and won the case, so that they were forbidden by the magistrates to sell the book; but he states that they perversely sent some Dominicans, with their saddle-bags well stuffed with the books, to distribute them furtively here and there:

Was not that a fine trick, and worthy of so holy an Order? Having accomplished their plan they vanished, one to Zealand, one to Gueldres, and a third I know not where. The leader alone held his ground, until a little while afterwards he was taken from the land of the living. But one such deed was sufficient to render his name immortal. And this man, the artful plotter of such carryings on, was particularly angry with me because I did not love his Order, of which he was so great an ornament, forsooth.[22]

Then he goes on to relate how another monk from the pulpit accused him of heresy, and on coming down therefrom was met by one of Erasmus' learned friends who demanded to know one heretical passage.

Where do you think that he has erred? As buffoons are wont to do, he declared that he had never read any of my lucubrations, that though he had tried to read my *Praise of Folly* he had found therein such profound Latinity—for these were his words—that he feared that I might have fallen into some heresy.[23]

Of course, as Erasmus does not name any of these remarkably stupid monks, he was perfectly safe in writing about them to Lipsius, who lived afar off and had no means of ascertaining the truth or falsity of the charges had he been so inclined. There may have been some basis in fact; but, knowing as we do Erasmus' inability to refrain from exaggeration, we are inclined to be skeptical. It is a matter which we shall leave to each reader's judgment. We will give another example of what to us is incredible:

When first the *Epistolæ obscurorum virorum appeared,* it was received with great applause by the Franciscan and Dominican monks in Great Britain, who persuaded themselves that it had been written in all seriousness to abuse Reuchlin and to favor the monks; and although a certain one of their number, who was remarkably well educated but very censorious, pretended that he was very much offended by its style, they consoled the fellow by saying, "Don't mind the style, old chap, but look at the opinions expressed therein." Nor would they have perceived that it was a joke to this very day, had not someone added an epistle declaring that the thing was not to be taken seriously.[24]

[21] *Idem.*, E-F.
[22] *Ibid.*, col. 1110A.
[23] *Idem*, B.
[24] *Idem*, B-C.

This was a joke on the English people, and intended to make Lipsius, who was a Brabanter, smile; but to us of to-day it is entirely incredible that the English monks were so dense that they innocently swallowed as Gospel truth the contents of a work which had made the monks all over Europe furious. The source of Erasmus' information on this point was undoubtedly More, who phrases the matter very differently:

> It is worth a good deal to see how greatly the *Epistolæ obscurorum virorum* pleases everybody, the learned taking it as a joke, and the unlearned accepting it in all seriousness, who, while we are laughing, deem it is only the style we are laughing at, and while they do not defend it in that respect declare that this is made up for by the importance of the sentiments expressed therein, and that in this rusty scabbard there hides a most excellent sword. I would that they had given another name to the book; for, indeed, not in a hundred years would men dull by inclination perceive the nose [wit, satire] of the work were it even longer than that of a rhinoceros.[25]

There is nothing here about monks, even if we admit that More had some of them in mind, which is possible. But there is certainly nothing in it about the Franciscans and Dominicans of England, and the mention of them in this connection is due entirely to Erasmus' riotous imagination. However, if the English of to-day are ready to admit that the English monks of the time of Erasmus were too dense to see a joke, they must not be surprised if the rest of the world seeks to hide a smile.

Although we cannot insist that these stories of Erasmus anent the monks are beneath his dignity if we ourselves dignify them by admitting them to our pages, yet we will insert at least one more. He says:

> I will relate another instance still more stupid. In a certain monastery of Dominicans the prior had divided my lucubrations amongst his brethren, so that he might collect therefrom my mistakes. To one of them there chanced to fall my Jerome. This monk, to whom Jerome was no less unknown than Erasmus, began to note promiscuously whatever offended him, either in Jerome, or my notes thereon, with the result that he amassed a huge pile of errors from Jerome. Now, when each brought forward in the assembly what he had marked down, this fellow was expecting great praise because none had detected more mistakes than he. However, one of the more prudent monks perceived that the fellow of whom I am speaking had made no distinction whatever between Jerome and Erasmus, and so, instead of the hoped-for praise, he received only ridicule.[26]

It seems to us that this probably happened; but Erasmus, with his usual indefiniteness, fails to tell us who this monk was, what was the name of the monastery, what menial position the monk occupied in the monastery, or what claims he made, if any, to the right to criticize

[25] Eras. Ep. 481.

[26] Eras. Ep. (LB) col. 1112A-B.

Erasmus. The prior had placed a duty on the brother, and he performed it in obedience and to the very best of his ability. If he had not the acquirements of Erasmus, none possibly felt his deficiencies more than himself, or was sorrier therefor. And, after all, why should the mighty Erasmus mind what this obscure little monk had either said or done about him? It was using the club of Hercules on an inoffensive dormouse. Both Lipsius and Erasmus were Augustinian canons, and we know from many sources that there was much jealousy existing between the various Orders at times.[27]

When Erasmus chose Lipsius to listen to this tirade against the Franciscans and Dominicans, with an occasional thrust at the Carmelites, he had probably found a ready listener, for Lipsius has left on record evidence to show that he somewhat agreed with Erasmus in his estimate of these Orders. But, supposing that the most of these incredible things of which he speaks contained in them a modicum of truth, how are we to condemn these several monks whom Erasmus thus marks out for their ignorance, their grave superstition, their belief in the impossible, when we see him lending himself to spreading the same belief in the miraculous? Writing to the Bishop of Liège just at this very time, he tells him the following strange and improbable story, which, however, he seems himself to have believed religiously:

> . . . In a district which is called the Old Town, a certain countryman suddenly fell dead in the inn while making sport of the Eucharist. Witnesses have testified that it happened as follows. A certain rustic sacristan was carrying about with him a box of unconsecrated wafers which are called *hosts,* and with him as companion was another countryman who had formerly been a sacristan. When they arrived at the village already mentioned, they decided to have a drink. At the inn his companion asked of the sacristan to let him

[27] The acquaintance of Lipsius with Erasmus dates from the time when he was about eighteen years old, and as he was very much younger than Erasmus his boyish admiration for him lasted all his life. He was always ready to assist the great writer in his literary work, and was of particular help in getting out his St. Augustine for the Frobens, as also the edition of St. Ambrose which Erasmus had entrusted to the same press at Basle. After the death of Erasmus, Lipsius continued to do work for the Frobens. He survived Erasmus about nineteen years, but always dwelt with his Order, spending his last years as chaplain of a nunnery at Lens, but making an occasional visit to the University of Louvain. As showing the intimate relations in which they stood to each other, I deem it proper to insert here the following details which were kindly furnished me by P. M. Barnard, M.A., of Tunbridge Wells, Eng. This gentleman had in his possession a copy of the *Gregorii Nazianzeni Carmina,* 4to., Venetii, ex Aldi Academia, 1504, which had once belonged to Erasmus, but which he had afterwards presented to Lipsius, as is evident from the inscription on the title page. At the bottom of the title page Erasmus had written, "Sum Erasmi, nec muto dominum." (I belong to Erasmus, and I do not change masters.) Under this Lipsius wrote, "Fui Erasmi, et mutaui dominum." (I did belong to Erasmus, and have changed masters.) At some later date Erasmus wrote under Lipsius' entry the following, "Imo non mutaui, cum amicus sit alter ipse." (Nay, I have not changed [masters], since a friend is a second self.) Lipsius had sent Erasmus a present, and this book was sent in return, accompanied by a letter, which may be seen in the Brussels MS. 4850-7, folio 142 v° (a).

have a *host,* which request the latter, after some hesitation, granted. On receiving it began to consecrate it in jest, which the landlady, perceiving, strenuously objected to. But the fellow retorted, "It is none of your affair; go, bring us some wine." When the woman returned, she beheld the man stretched out on the floor, and demanded to know what had happened. Those who were drinking at a neighboring table replied that perhaps he had fainted. The woman brings vinegar; they apply it, but in vain: he was stone dead. This is not a fable. Other rumors are about, but I do not want to write concerning what I have not fully ascertained.[28]

We have already quoted many instances of his firm belief in the supernatural, and could readily amplify the list. He was just as superstitious as Luther. They who have written of Luther tells us that he firmly believed that all misfortunes, diseases, pestilences, earthquakes, and every kind of disaster, were the work of Satan. Shooting stars, comets, and the Northern Lights, were always objects of dread to him, and indicated to his mind the near approach of the end of the world.

If Erasmus could have freed his mind from his personal antipathies, his faults of exaggeration, and his tendency to clandestine detraction, the evening of his life would have been much pleasanter; but his suspicious nature misled his judgment in many ways. With advancing years he seemed to grow more peevish, more easily offended, and more wrapped up in his favorite obsession of the monks. It angered him that they should resent his aspersions and give him blow for blow. They could not and would not forget that he was one of themselves, and that, while they had lived up to the obligations which they had assumed, he had sought to loosen the ties which he had fastened upon himself, acting from motives that were not at all of a spiritual order. And so the contest went on between them until he died, but we shall not refer to the subject any more, since it is unpleasant and serves no purpose, except to show us a side of his nature which seems narrow and undignified.

[28] Eras. Ep. (H) p. 784, ll. 27-36.

CHAPTER XXI

RESIDENCE AT BASLE NO LONGER POSSIBLE: DEPARTURE TO FREIBURG

The letters which he wrote at the opening of 1529 include a eulogy of his friend Jacob Wimpfeling, who had just died. Since Wimpfeling seems to have exercised a great influence over Erasmus by the ideas that he had early advanced in his various writings, some mention of him is necessary here. He was born at Schletstadt in Alsace in 1450, and, like Erasmus, received the foundations of his education at the hands of the Brethren of the Common Life. Thence he entered successively the Universities of Freiburg and Heidelberg, and was ordained a priest in 1483, after which he was made preacher to the Cathedral of Spires. The University of Heidelberg offering him a position in the faculty of arts, he left Spires; but, after only two years, he was attracted by the growing fame of Geiler von Kaisersberg, and joined him at Strassburg, where he assisted him in editing the works of Gerson. From his close connection with Geiler von Kaisersberg it is not to be wondered at that Wimpfeling imbibed also a taste for the unconventional, and we soon find him assailing the failings and errors of his contemporaries with startling vigor. His first work was entitled *De integritate,* treating mainly of the irregular lives led by some of the clergy, and particularly of those who, like Erasmus' father, had formed illicit connections. Then he attacked the Monastic Orders, especially the Augustinians, and essayed to prove that St. Augustine had never been a monk. Erasmus had used the same argument so often in his letters that we can readily set down Wimpfeling as the source of his inspiration. Wimpfeling's book started a controversy on the subjects treated therein which was waged with much acrimony, until Pope Julius II commanded silence on all concerned, and it was only when Luther appeared that Wimpfeling felt he was going to be vindicated at last. When, however, he beheld the lengths to which Luther's violence had led him, when he heard Bucer preaching justification by faith alone, and when he saw Capito rejecting all claims of the Mother of Christ to our pious regard as the mother of the Redeemer, he dissociated himself from all the reformers.[1] Wimpfeling, like Reuchlin, seems to have suffered from the overofficiousness of some of the minor Church authorities, who, as Erasmus tells us, "summoned him to Rome . . . to answer to the charge which he had made in his book, that St. Augustine was not a monk, or, at least, not such a monk as the Augustinians then were, since these latter depict him in their records and writings as having his beard long, and wearing a black cowl with

[1] See Schmidt, *Historie litéraire de l'Alsace,* Vol. I, p. 52. Paris, 1879.

a leather girdle. Julius II, with the approbation of all good men, extinguished by his authority this flame, which from a small spark would have spread widely." [2] It is rather unusual to see Erasmus praising Pope Julius II. When Wimpfeling found that his efforts to reform the clergy of that era had failed, he wisely retired from the arena and spent the remainder of his days in instructing the young and in living an exemplary life in accordance with his own ideals. Though discouraged, he must have felt that God was still protecting His Church in His own way, and that it was not for him to question His wisdom. How much happier would the last years of Erasmus have been if he had imitated Wimpfeling in this regard!

But we must return to Erasmus at Basle, where his increasing difficulties had made that city a dubious place for his further residence. We have already told of the feverish condition of affairs there when speaking, a few pages previously, of the activities of Oecolampadius. At the time when Erasmus had chosen Basle as the ideal spot for his residence, because he was there independent of kings and kaisers, he had no idea that a radical change was soon to take place in that city as a result of the various conflicting efforts of Carlstadt, Zwingli, Bucer, Oecolampadius, and others; but such was the fact. Basle, from being by virtue of its University the defender of militant Catholicity had in a short time become the arena of debate, innovation, and compromise. The city council had decided that every innovator should have a fair hearing, whence the city became the Mecca of all men whose religious opinions were wavering, and of all who were seeking an audience for whatever ideas they felt constrained to express. This was what had attracted to Basle such men as Oecolampadius, Farel, Hutten, and others whose names will occur to the reader. For the same reasons the Anabaptists had there obtained some standing, and matters were in a chaotic state. The city council began to see that its liberality had brought difficulties along with it; and, in order to bring light out of the murkiness which such a plethora of individual utterances was causing, they finally decided to invite Marius, a cathedral preacher, and Oecolampadius, to present the opposite views on one at least of the much debated subjects, namely, the Mass. Party feeling ran so high in consequence of this debate that the city council did not dare to make the decision between the debaters, though both were given permission to print their speeches. Thus was confusion worse confounded, until, in the spring of this present year 1529, the city council was compelled, in deference to public opinion, to limit the celebration of the Mass to three of the many churches in Basle. But that there was neither light nor leading in Basle is not to be wondered at, since all the reformers were groping in exterior darkness as to what and how much of the ancient belief of the Church they would believe or disbelieve. To enforce on the one hand and to repudiate on the other these opposing convictions, the various monarchs, both Protestant and Catholic, were being gradually marshaled into two hostile camps; and Erasmus could not fail to see that very soon—indeed, too soon for his peace of mind—he would be compelled to choose between

[2] Eras. Ep. (LB) col. 1141D-E.

these two camps. He tells us of the condition of affairs at Basle in a letter to Juan Vergara:

> Here amid the cold of winter the war on idols yet waxes so hot that of the images not a fly is left in the churches, the Mass is radically abolished, and ecclesiastical rites, save that there is still the sermon; then the women with the children sing a psalm composed in German numbers; occasionally they distribute bread as a symbol of the Lord's body. Both the monks and nuns are ordered to put off their holy dress and go elsewhere. So far, nevertheless, there has been no violent entrance into anyone's private house, and bloodshed is avoided—may it always be. For so many German and Swiss cities have given their names to an alliance that, if the matter comes to the sword, I prefer to be far off. Great indeed is the power of princes, but where will you find a soldier prepared to fight for the right of the priest? [3]

He felt that to remain longer in such a city would only compromise him in the eyes of the Catholics; and though his attachment to the doctrines of either side was neither broad nor deep he did not have the courage to take a stand which might offend the one or the other, showing that he was the same irresolute, self-seeking, and unsatisfactory Erasmus that he had always been. So we find him writing to Bernard, Bishop of Trent, to obtain from his suzerain Ferdinand, king of Hungary and Bohemia, the permission and the necessary passport to enable him to live in Freiburg under that monarch:

> Reverend Bishop. I hope that this much-spoken-of Council [4] will procure for us the long-hoped-for tranquillity against this tempest, with the Lord's assistance, which Council His Serene Highness the King of Hungary and Bohemia with what I consider pious zeal is attempting to bring about. Your Lordship will easily guess in what a coil I am here, not that I fear anything from the city council, but there is a great rabble of all kinds in this city. I have many enemies and some friends, but the influence of the latter is not of great weight in the present state of affairs. I should very much like my friends to bring it about that His Most Serene Highness King Ferdinand should invite me hence by letter, as if he needed to use me in some matter. I trust I shall be at liberty to depart hence, not that I am accountable to anyone, but in that way I may make my departure more safely. There is no place I should prefer to Spires, but I fear that my very infirm health would be poorly calculated to withstand the clamorous bickerings of the princes. Freiburg is my next choice, but it is a very petty town, and I hear that the townspeople are somewhat superstitious. For a long time the eating of fish has so disagreed with me that, if I even touch it, I am in danger of my life. Although I have the best of reasons, and although I have a papal dispensation covering all cases, yet the ignorant populace would

[3] Eras. Ep. (LB) col. 1171B-C.
[4] He is alluding to the Diet to be held at Spires, March 15, 1529.

exclaim at me, erring no less by their superstition than the opposite side errs by its wilful disobedience. For it is a graver matter to condemn your neighbor who, compelled by the greatest necessity and authorized by the Supreme Pontiff's permission, eats meat, than if he ate it without necessity. This very thing has kept me here for quite a time, for perhaps I should not have minded moving in the winter season. Hence I beg of you, that of your wonderful kindness you will give me your advice and help in this matter; and may you ever enjoy the best of health. I am sending you the proof-sheets of my work, *On the Christian Widow,* which I have, at the request of a certain person, dedicated to Her Most Serene Highness Maria, former Queen of Hungary, whose brother I have been unwilling to interrupt with correspondence, occupied as I deem he must be by such a multitude of affairs. His Majesty has always had and ever will have my most willing service as long as my life lasts. Basle, February 24, 1529.[5]

In a similar letter to Louis Ber of the University of Basle he says:

. . . How safe it may be for me to remain here I know not. Murmurings and threats, not at all evangelical, of a few are brought to my notice, and I know well that wherever I go it will be at the risk of my life, although that is only a trifle, since even a change of wine or of clothing is a source of peril to me. But whatever the result, I must go away somewhere.[6]

So we gather that he was in great tribulation at this time. But that was not the whole of his troubles. When, as a last resort, he was about to depart for Freiburg, he was taken sick with his old malady the gravel, or in more modern medical parlance, renal calculi. At the same time, Jerome Froben, upon whom he seemed to lean in his business matters, was absent at the Frankfurt book fair,[7] and in the present crisis of affairs he felt almost helpless without the aid and advice of this young and energetic publisher. So he goes on to tell Ber in a letter a month later that, though it is bad enough to be old, and still worse to be sick, yet the worst of all is to be surrounded by men who are hostile to him. He bitterly regrets the loss of many of his friends whom Luther's doctrines have weaned away from him, some of whom are now declared enemies, and others of them secret defamers of his reputation:

. . . When will there be an end of these screeds by which I am being battered, and of the rage of those whose teeth are piercing arrows, on whose lips is the poison of serpents, and whose tongues are sharp swords? When will their villany cease? From such outrageous conduct neither shame, nor conscience, nor the authority of their rulers, nor the fruitlessness of their efforts so often cast in

[5] Eras. Ep. (LB) col. 1158E-1159C.
[6] *Ibid.,* col. 1161C-D.
[7] We have had occasion to mention this celebrated book fair very often; and if any one of our readers wishes to learn more about it we would refer him to H. Estienne's *La Foire de Francfort,* translated from an ancient account of 1576 by Liseux, Paris, 1875.

> their face, restrains them from doing their nefarious work at meals, in private conversations, in secret confession, in sermons, in public lectures, in the palaces of kings, in traveling by land and sea. . . . And they are everywhere and speak all tongues. . . . And so they make themselves prevail, even though their cause, as they say, is barren. Now I speak only Latin; but had I a hundred tongues, of what avail am I alone against so many banded phalanxes, particularly when I have to fight not only against the forces of the enemy but also those of my own side? There is not one of these sects which does not hate me mortally, but especially that one whose members are trying to take away the Real Presence from us, and yet I am traduced to certain bishops and princes of being, as it were, in collusion with such as those.[8]

Then he compares himself with St. Stephen, who was stoned to death, and with St. Sebastian, who was transfixed with arrows.

> . . . In such a flood of evils there is no quiet harbor of refuge throwing out a comforting light for my old age, now that I am fit neither for the tables of the lowly nor the halls of princes, except on condition that I associate myself with some one of these sects, a thing which I would surely have done had I been able to convince myself that everything they taught was right. Because I have not in any way been able to do this in the past, nor even now, I have resolved to fight with six hundred sects rather than depart from the fold of the Catholic Church.[9]

Then he recites most of the causes that have been at work to make his life miserable, and seems to draw on his knowledge of painting to spread his colors, darkening the picture here and there with a morose pressure of his brush, or touching it up in lighter shades when the case seems to demand it. As is usual with neurasthenics, he blames everyone but himself, and, as mentioned, assumes the attitude of martyrdom in likening himself to St. Stephen and St. Sebastian. First he pays his respects to the theologians:

> It is not obscure for what frivolous reasons these people first attacked me. To the great advantage of theology I cultivated languages and polite literature, which they now pretend to admire, although more than forty years ago they left no stone unturned to destroy and uproot them when they were just beginning to spring up. And that was the seed of this present tragedy. I exhorted the theologians that, leaving aside their little questions which have more of ostentation than of piety, they should betake themselves to the very sources of the Scriptures and to the ancient fathers of the Church. Moreover, I did not wish that scholastic theology should be abolished, but that it should be purer and more serious. That, unless I am mistaken, is to favor, not to hurt it. I exhorted the monks to be what they said they were, namely, dead to the world, to trust less to external ceremonial, and to embrace rather true

[8] Eras. Ep. (LB) col. 1177F-1178B. [9] *Ibid.*, col. 1178D-E.

piety of soul. Is this wishing well or ill to the monks? I have noticed a few who take vows on themselves rashly, others who seek to entrap untutored youth in their net; but I have never approved of those who, without grave reasons, or without the authority of the Popes, desert their Order; nay, I have even counseled and strengthened many who were in doubt on this point. . . . Never have I contemned the constitutions and rites of the Church, nor taught that they were to be contemned; but I have given preference to the precepts of God; I have shown the progression from ceremonies to better things; and, if by the negligence of man anything foreign to them has crept in, I have indicated how such might be corrected, a thing which the Church has often done. There is no sacrament of the Church which I have not always venerated, although I perceive that the ancient fathers entertained differing ideas concerning Matrimony. Regarding sacramental Confession I have never doubted, but have considered it to be religiously observed as if coming down to us from the spirit of Christ; and I have never dared, nor would I now dare, to approach the table of Christ to depart this life, without confessing to a priest what was troubling my conscience. It is only that I have had my doubts whether the sort of confession now in use has been handed down to us by Christ himself; but my doubts have been only such that I should favor it strongly if anyone were to prove it by unanswerable arguments. I have never dreamed of abrogating the Mass. Concerning the Eucharist I see no end of arguing; yet I have never been able to persuade myself, nor shall I, that Christ who is truth, who is love, would have permitted his beloved Spouse to remain so long in such an abominable error, and suffer her to adore a fragment of bread instead of Himself. Touching the words with which we consecrate, I confess that at times I have desired to be more fully instructed; but regarding such scruples I easily allow myself to acquiesce in the judgment of the Catholic Church. The teaching by which certain persons attribute to everybody the power of consecrating, absolving, and ordaining, I have always held to be manifest insanity. I have always shrunk from sects and schisms, nor have I hitherto associated myself with any faction, although many reasons pushed me in that direction; nor have I ever collected any disciples, or, if I obtained any, I handed them over to Christ. . . . It was not necessary for anyone, on account of the wicked morals of some, to depart from the pious dogmas of the Church; but it is the duty of Christian prudence to extirpate once and for all both root and branch of these evils so that they may not easily spring up again. My own private misfortune I bear with more resignation because I know it cannot last very long. Already I am declining, and I recognize that my last hour is near; but indeed I cannot contemplate the open ruin of the Church without grieving. If this storm affected only those who are responsible for it, things would be more bearable. Now how many pious priests, how many upright monks, how many holy virgins, are being treated with indignity in various

ways? and, if we regard the beginning of this affair, more atrocious things seem to threaten us, unless the goodness of a propitious Deity shall deign to avert them, the which I trust will not be lacking to us if with sincere hearts we have recourse thereto. In this goodness, my dearest lord and friend in Christ, let your heart and the hearts of all the afflicted find consolation. Basle, April 1, 1529.[10]

This letter is to be conned by the reader with great care, since it is Erasmus' confession of what he believes at the end of his stormy and wavering career. Since the letter is very long, space has prevented us from giving it entire; but we would earnestly suggest its study and investigation to those who are interested in the great writer's creed, as he formulated it here for us in his sixty-third year. The inferences that one must draw are that he was a Catholic in full communion with the Church, and that he repudiated Luther and the other reformers without reservation either mental or expressed. He strengthens his declaration of faith further in a letter to Fonseca, Archbishop of Toledo, wherein he says:

. . . What I have been able to accomplish at my own risk, and without imperiling the cause, I have done; and I have testified secretly, openly, publicly, privately, by my word, my pen, and my acts, that I am unwilling to depart from the unity of the Church by a hair's breadth.[11]

Since we shall have to take up this phase in our conclusion, we will not dwell on it here, but proceed to speak of his exiling himself from his beloved Basle. Writing to Antony Fugger, who by reason of his immense wealth was the Rothschild of that day, he thanks him for a silver cup which the banker had presented to him at the same time that he had invited him to come and live at Augsburg, and, besides sending him traveling expenses, had also offered him an annual pension. But Augsburg was as much in the maelstrom of unrest as Basle, and Erasmus courteously declined the generous offer, telling the banker that:

. . . I am accustomed for so many years to this nest, and to transplant an old tree is frowned upon even by a proverb of the Greeks. All the same, it is not safe for me to remain here, not that anyone commands me to go, but that those who wish me ill and who spread calumnies about me on every occasion will, if I stay here any longer, take it to indicate that I approve of whatever is going on here. . . . Also, since I must leave Basle, I prefer to get somewhat far away from it.[12]

So he left Basle with mingled feelings of regret and pleasure, Glareanus having preceded him to arrange matters for his residence in Freiburg. Louis Ber was already established there as a professor in the University, he too having been compelled to leave Basle when the old order of things began to topple.[13] A friend and admirer older than

[10] *Ibid.*, col. 1179F-1181C. [11] *Ibid.*, col. 1174C. [12] *Ibid.*, col. 1185E-F.
[13] See J. C. Iseln's *Relatio de vita Ludouici Beri,* part of which is quoted by Jortin, *Erasmus,* Vol. III, p. 135.

either of these was also awaiting his arrival at Freiburg, namely, Udalric Zasius, Professor of Canon Law in the same University, to whom we have already alluded; so that the prospect did not seem entirely destitute of redeeming features. The main thing was to leave Basle with dignity, for his going was not at all pleasing to some who felt that his departure in this way was a silent censure of their own acts and utterances. One of them was Oecolampadius, who had already had several acute differences with Erasmus, and who was a man who expressed his sentiments at any cost. When Oecolampadius heard that Glareanus had gone to Freiburg, he wrote to Gryneus that it was no loss, since he was so addicted to slandering.[14] Whether or not he held similar opinions about the going of Erasmus we are unable to say, but it certainly caused him a bad quarter of an hour before he bade him good-bye, the occasion for it being given him by Erasmus. It seems that things had reached such a pass that Erasmus felt it better to avoid all occasions of being seen talking with the Lutheran adherents generally. Hence when he happened to encounter some of them one day in the streets of Basle, he was accused of covering his face with his hood that he might not be obliged to stop and talk with them. He was also suspected of having satirized Oecolampadius in that one of his colloquies called the *Cyclops; or, the Gospel Bearer,* in which he inveighs against those who are always quoting the Gospel, but show it not at all by their lives. Religious hypocrites are aimed at openly, and for some reasons which were entertained by those contemporary with them it was set down that Erasmus had Oecolampadius in mind in this colloquy. Hearing of this, Erasmus hastened to disclaim the fact, and asked Oecolampadius to meet him, when he would give him a full explanation. Whether the explanation was satisfactory or not we have no means of knowing, nor is it of importance here.

From a letter which he sent to his friend Pirckheimer after reaching Freiburg we learn of some of the difficulties which were thrown in the way of his leaving Basle:

> . . . Some of them invented pretexts to delay me, now alleging this reason and now that, though none of them approached me in person. It had been decided between my friends and the captain of my boat that I should sail, not from the bridge which is the most crowded part of the city, but from the dock near St. Anthony's church, which is also a municipal dock. But the captain was called to the city hall again and again, where two hours were lost in consultations. What it was all about I know not, but the captain was forbidden to sail from any dock than that near the bridge. He maintained that it had always been allowable to sail from any public dock whatsoever, but they replied that he must not do so in this instance. As the matter referred to no one but myself, I concluded that it was forbidden with no good intention towards me. What did I do? I obeyed the city council and sailed from the

[14] Gerdes, *Hist. euangelii, saec. XVI passim per Europam renouati,* Vol. II, Appendix, p. 149. Gröningen, 1744-52.

> bridge dock, allowing myself to be gazed at by the people for a space of time. However, beyond this, nothing disagreeable occurred, everything else turning out most charmingly, and nothing for many years grieved me less than leaving Basle. I departed thence not only with the greatest regret of my friends there, but also with the sorrow of those who are in favor of the new order of things, there being some amongst them who are wiser than others. I preferred to depart in this manner rather than surrounded by rejoicing friends.[15]

And so he left Basle and went to Freiburg, where the magistrates of the town had given him the use of an unfinished palace which had been intended for the deceased Emperor Maximilian, but which the magistrates, after reading the letters of recommendation which King Ferdinand had given him, deemed appropriate for the residence of the great Erasmus. The very last work which he finished before leaving Basle, and which had delayed his departure, was his edition of the works of St. Augustine, which he intended to be the companion work to his St. Jerome. It was magnificently gotten out in ten octavo volumes, and has added no little to his lasting reputation. It has been said that he had small love for this father of the Church, but the warm eulogy which he gives him in this work would seem to negative this assertion.[16]

It was just at this time that the unfortunate Louis Berquin was burnt at the stake. This French scholar was one of the greatest admirers of Erasmus, and a man who tried to put into practice the ideas that he had imbibed from the various works of his idol. Perhaps there is no sadder chapter in the lamentable history of those times than that which tells us how Berquin, young, enthusiastic, of splendid moral character, with all the ardor of a crusader, met the fate of Savonarola, and with equal courage. He had become thoroughly imbued with the spirit of Erasmus, and had even translated the latter's *Enchiridion,* illustrating it with his own notes and comments. Such was his affection for Erasmus that he assumed all his enmities, for whoever said a word against the great writer was held personally responsible to himself. Thus it was that he assailed Bedda and the whole University of Paris in behalf of the absent scholar, German though he was; and, since they were in correspondence, it is allowable to assume that Erasmus guided, advised, and counseled him in that long and bitter quarrel. After Berquin had perished, Erasmus disclaimed any responsibility for the affair, stating that he had always deprecated Berquin's activity in the matter. This is surely not so. It is indubitable that his writings and example were a powerful and constant incentive to Berquin, ever urging him on to put in force the teachings of his master. But he had not the skill to evade, the craft to avoid, the dexterity to elude, or the artifice to escape, the consequences of his rash courage, for Erasmus had not taught him the importance of always being prepared to explain away or minimize his

[15] Eras. Ep. (LB) col. 1219C-E.

[16] Jortin, with all his regard for Erasmus, did not accept his estimate of St. Augustine, stating his opinion that this father as an author "hath done more harm than good to the Christian world." (See *Erasmus,* Vol. I, p. 434.)

utterances; and this was a fatal defect. Erasmus had taught him that much of what Luther was putting forward was worthy of consideration, and he proceeded forthwith to investigate the latter's writings. But Luther's writings had been forbidden by the Parliament of Paris (not by the Sorbonne, be it noted); and when some of these were found in Berquin's study he was clapped into jail and only released therefrom by the intercession of Louise of Savoy. Then he proceeded to write controversial works, which again brought him into trouble on account of alleged heretical opinions therein advanced, and this time it was King Francis himself who came to his assistance. Nothing, however, could dismay him, and he was in deeper trouble still. But we shall let Erasmus tell the rest of the story:

> . . . At length he was restored to liberty so that he might the more easily be able to advance his cause. His confidence was something wonderful to describe. Not only did he promise himself acquittal, but also a victory, and that a brilliant one. He declared the victory was in his hands; but he preferred to delay his case a little in order that he might have a more magnificent triumph. And now, in turn, he charged the Faculty of Theology itself, the monks, and the abettors of Bedda, with impiety, for he had discovered some of their secret acts. The more the man was pleased with himself the more I feared for him; and so in frequent letters I counseled him to free himself from trial even by artifice, that is, that his friends would bring it about that he might go on an embassy, for instance, which would keep him away for a long time, during which the theologians might in the interval allow the case against him to lapse, but would never suffer themselves to endure the charge of heresy which he had made against them. Again and again I urged him to reflect on the snakelike nature of Bedda, and how many reasons the latter had for voiding his venom. I bade him remember that he was dealing with an immortal adversary in this matter, for the Faculty of Theology never dies; and also to reflect that a man who gets angry with three monks brings down on his back many phalanxes not only of the wealthy and the powerful, but also of those who are the most rascally and, at the same time, the most skilled in every kind of malice, and that these men would never rest until they had encompassed his destruction, even though he were to have a better cause than Christ had; and, finally, that he ought not to depend too much on the protection of the king. . . . Then I told him that if none of these reasons influenced him, he might run his affairs to suit himself, for I did not desire to have any trouble with the monastic forces, nor with the Faculty of Theology. . . . I besought him to take care of himself if he valued his life, to fly somewhere even were it into Germany, where no one made trouble on account of such matters as these, not even the orthodox, unless one profess such things so openly as to excite sedition. I added that I long ago regretted our friendship which had procured for me more trouble than the dangerous enmities of many

besides; but, although I dinned this into his ears, I accomplished nothing. After this, however, he wrote me more infrequently and more coldly, having a presentiment, I assume, that not everything was going to respond to his transcendent hopes. Indeed I am sorry for the fellow's fate, and if he were in error I deem that it was from persuasion and not from malice that he erred; for as to the merits of his case, as I have already said, I know nothing. But what can you do for a man who is eager for death, and is arranging his own funeral, as the saying is. . . . To burn a man for any error whatsoever is something new, and I am wondering whence this custom sprang. Yet I would earnestly approve of the religious minds of the French people if they had as much spiritual judgment as they now have of tendency to superstition. . . . Certainly, up to this time they have shown themselves to be profitable servants of the Roman Pontiff. They deserve worthy princes, since they faithfully serve those whom they have happened to have. And yet perhaps it is better to err on that side than to attempt the unbridled license which we observe to be rife in some states of Germany, where the Pope is Antichrist, where the Cardinals are the creatures of Antichrist, where the bishops are hobgoblins, where the priests are pigs, where the monasteries are conventicles of Satan, and where the sovereigns are tyrants. The Evangelicals have the upper hand, but they are in arms, and more skilled in fighting than in disputing. This is all that I can write about Berquin; and if he died with a clear conscience, as I sincerely hope, what can be happier?[17]

Erasmus manifests such a coldness, such a callousness, in relating the facts about the death of his young and fervent admirer, that one feels more or less shocked at the recital. That Berquin loved and honored him to his own undoing is beyond question; and, when his mind had become saturated with Erasmianism and he had endangered his life by advocating its risky tenets, it is almost incredible that Erasmus could thus have coldly whistled him down the wind, and have succinctly told him that their friendship had become irksome to him. What a revelation it must have been to the brave Berquin to find that his idol had feet of clay! Surely Erasmus was in some degree responsible for his untimely death. We are forcibly reminded of what Melancthon said one time when admonished by Camerarius not to write to Erasmus any more. After promising that he would do so no more, he went on to say that he never much desired the friendship of Erasmus. "See," said he, "how little judgment our enemies have. They love this man who in his books has scattered the seeds of many dogmas which, perhaps, would have excited far graver tumults eventually, had not Luther arisen and drawn the zealous efforts of mankind into another direction."[18] And Melancthon spoke the unvarnished truth, and in these few but pregnant words has furnished Lee, Stunica, Bedda, and the rest of them their sufficient justification.

[17] Eras. Ep. (LB) col. 1209A-1210E.
[18] Sculteti *Annales* apud Von der Hardt, *Hist. Liter. Reform.*, p. 151.

Constant illness, which generally serves to soften the characters of men, only helped in the case of Erasmus to harden further a naturally selfish disposition. On the occasion of receiving a letter, accompanying his annual pension, from his old patron Lord Mountjoy, he made the rather ungracious remark that "it was a queer fortune which now offered him food when he had no longer teeth to chew it," unmindful of the fact that Mountjoy had paid him this pension faithfully during all the years that had elapsed since their Paris days. Then he goes on to lament over what he calls the perfidy of Peter Barbirius, who, he insists, had robbed him of his Courtrai pension, which reminds him that he had heard Archbishop Warham was not very well, and adds that, if anything were to happen to that prelate, it would be all over with his pensions. So we glean that old age was accentuating his egoism. He tells Mountjoy:

> . . . You console me for the troubles caused me by my calumniators, but you know not the tenth part of those things which certain wretches secretly attempt against me by diabolic arts, hiding themselves under the name of Evangelicals. I will write to your son and his preceptor . . . if my health shall permit; but with such a flood of correspondence it begins to grow wearisome to me; yet I cannot tell why, unless it be due to the dryness of my bowels.[19]

And so it was during all the rest of his days, a closer concentration on self, a more constant exacting from others, and a diminishing regard for everybody and everything which did not directly administer to himself. If possible, he was more pusillanimous than ever. Take as an example his advice to his friend Viglius Zuichemus, one of his youthful admirers whom he was warning not to allow his name to become mixed up with those of the warring sects:

> . . . Even if you feel like agreeing with their dogmas, dissemble the fact. Still, I am loath that you should argue against them. It is enough for a lawyer like you to fool them, just as a certain man who was about to die fooled the Devil. His Satanic Majesty asked him what he believed. He replied that he believed what the Church believed. Thereupon the Devil inquired what the Church believed. He answered that the Church believed as he did. "But what do you believe?" said the Devil again. "What the Church believes," he still replied. I trust my admonition will be unnecessary; but if I could speak to you in person I could show you that I am not warning you without cause.[20]

When finally settled in the rambling but elaborate palace which the kindness of King Ferdinand had provided for him, he applied himself with ardor to oversee the getting out of an edition in Latin and Greek of the works of St. Chrysostom, parts of which were being translated and corrected for him by his friends, among whom were Germain de Brie and Simon Grynaeus.

But we must again return to Luther and see what he was doing.

[19] Eras. Ep. (LB) col. 1176E. [20] *Ibid.*, col. 1759F-1760A.

He had escaped unscathed from the power of the Emperor at the Diet of Worms in 1521, the result of which he announced most laconically in a note to the painter Lucas Cranach: "Are these books yours? Yes. Will you recant them? No. Then be off." [21] Under the terms of the Emperor's safe-conduct he had three days in which to get home, after which time he was to be treated as a heretic, always provided that his sovereign the Elector Frederick would permit it, which the latter consistently refused to do. Nothing more was to be expected until the Emperor should call for another Diet, which took place in the Bavarian city of Spires in 1526, at which it was hoped that the young Emperor would bring forces to bear on the Elector to influence him to yield up Luther. But the political situation that had to be met at the opening of the Diet engrossed the attention of the Emperor and his advisers far more than the doings of Luther at that critical moment; for Francis I had just broken the treaty of Madrid, and the Turks were threatening Hungary and all the Near East of Europe. Under such circumstances the Diet remained a purely political one, and Luther could breathe easily. But a second Diet was opened in the same city of Spires under the vastly changed conditions of 1529, for the redoubtable Francis was now suing for peace, and the dreaded Turks had seen fit to shift the scene of their activities to another direction. At this Diet it was decreed that the Mass should be restored wherever it had been abolished, that all books should be strictly censored before publication, and that all preachers who did not admit the Real Presence in the Eucharist should be forbidden to exercise their priestly functions. The Evangelicals present, who were decidedly in the minority, entered a formal protest, and from this circumstance originated the term "Protestant." But though they were in the minority it was a minority that could not be trifled with, as the Emperor soon realized. Consequently, he appointed another Diet to meet in the city of Augsburg on April 8th, of this year 1530, for the purpose of ending these religious dissensions. Thereupon the Elector John of Saxony summoned Luther, Melancthon, Jonas, and others of that party to prepare a statement of the Protestant faith for presentation to the Emperor. This, which was called the Confession of Augsburg, was drawn up by Melancthon and assented to by Luther, and on the assembling of the Diet was presented to the Emperor, who, being no theologian, passed it on to Eck, Wimpina, Cochlaeus, and the other divines of the Catholic party, who at once proceeded to write a Confutation of the same. This was read at the Diet on September 3rd, and a majority of those assembled declared that the Protestants had been completely refuted, whereupon they were commanded to conform to the doctrines and teachings of the Church, which, of course, they refused to do. Thus the Diet of Augsburg, from which so much was expected, failed, as the Diets of Worms and Spires had failed, because the harmonizing of clashing interests and unruly minds is the most gigantic task conceivable, while discord and disagreement require little effort and flatter the individual. While this was going on at Augsburg, how was it with Erasmus? He was expected as a Councilor of the

[21] De Wette, *Luthers Briefe*, Vol. I, p. 588.

Empire to be present; but he absented himself on the plea of ill health. When Melancthon saw that the struggle was going against the Protestants and that a religious war might result therefrom, he wrote to Erasmus, asking him to do his best to calm the resentment of the Emperor. The answer of Erasmus was to the effect that he did not desire to mingle in the affair at all, and showed his resentment against the Evangelicals.[22] And to be just to Erasmus, he had many grounds for complaint against the Evangelicals, some of whom hated and misrepresented him more even than ever Luther did. Nicholas Amsdorf, for instance, had written some annotations against Erasmus in which he asserted that Erasmus had preceded Luther in teaching the doctrine of faith without good works as all-sufficient for salvation. Of all the charges made against him, history acquits him of this at any rate.[23] Luther hardly credited what Amsdorf said about Erasmus in these annotations, as we see from the following letter which the reformer wrote to Amsdorf on April 12th of this year:

> Dear Amsdorf. As you requested, your annotations on Erasmus are being returned to you, in which this indeed surprised me, that at the very outset you declare Erasmus to have written even before Luther that faith without works justifies; saying afterwards according to a liberal interpretation that the law of Moses should be interpreted by itself. I know not whether he wrote so or not; I will only say that being certain yourself you shall publish what is certain (as you are wont to always), lest you give to those followers of his who are our bitterest enemies an opening against us. It has seemed proper that you should have the printing of your works done by yourselves, and you can easily guess the reason for this, not only on account of our friends, but also having our enemies in mind. See to it, therefore, that you act the part of a brave man, for Egranus [John Wildenhauer] is already writing vigorously against us in behalf of Erasmus, and by his defense will make Erasmus such as Eck made the Pope [Leo X] by a similar defense. If the fools keep silent, it were the best thing for Erasmus.[24] But the wrath of God against Erasmus raises up such defenders for him. If I live long enough I will spurn his *Defenders;* and I will so comb his *Defense* that it shall feel the comb to their heart's content. I have also yet up my sleeve something that you wot not of. Farewell in Christ, who lives and reigns not only in the days of Erasmus, but forever and ever, Amen, and we in Him. Amen.[25]

So we may safely conclude that the breach between Luther and Erasmus was irreparable, and that Luther's hatred was fully equalled by Eras-

[22] See Melancthon's letter, Eras. Ep. (LB), col. 1454E; and cf. 1494C.

[23] Amsdorf was a man of harsh and unyielding character, and was in every sense of the word an extremist. As an example of this we may cite the fact that he went beyond Luther's control in asserting that not only did faith alone justify, but that good works were detrimental to salvation, and after Luther's death he cut loose entirely from Melancthon and the followers of the Reformer. (See Meurer, *Leben d. Altväter d. Luth. Kirche,* Vol. III.)

[24] "Wenn die narren schweigen, das wär Erasmo das best."

[25] De Wette, *op. cit.,* Vol. III, pp. 568-9.

mus' disdain. Having thus fixed the status of Erasmus with regard to the Lutheran Evangelicals, we shall now attempt to explain his position with regard to the Catholic party. For this purpose we shall quote from two reliable and trustworthy authorities, both friends of his own, the Italian Sadoleti and the Englishman Tunstall, both saddened at the contemplation of the troubles which harassed the Church, and both equally eager to do what in them lay towards finding a remedy. As far as we know there was no particular intimacy existing between Sadoleti who was the Papal Secretary and Tunstall who was the Bishop of Durham; yet, strange to say, these two men, each of the utmost influence and importance in his own country, seemed to be actuated by the same urgent impulse to recall Erasmus to his proper and dignified self, to exhort him to cease a sort of tactics towards his adversaries which were unworthy of him, and which, worse still, were filling the enemies of the Church with an unholy joy; and to make public profession of the faith which was in him. We shall quote Tunstall first. Writing to Erasmus in January, 1530, he says:

> . . . As to what you write about numerous monks being influenced against you, the Franciscans especially, aroused thereto by the instigation of certain persons, if you answer denunciation with denunciation there will be no end to the discord by your fighting the multitude, since fire is not extinguished by fire, but is made to blaze the more hotly. Against annoyance of this kind the most useful remedy is that of St. Paul, "If thine enemy be hungry, give him to eat; if he thirst, give him drink; for doing this, then shall thou heap up coals of fire on his head." [26] And what is safer than to firmly hold on to the anchor of our hope, and to adhere to the orthodox Church? That is what you write me you are doing; and if any of these matters, about which you have been admonished, offend the Church, it is much better to purge yourself of them than to be exposed to the censure of others. So trust all your writings to the judgment of the Church; for after you have left this world the Church will declare her judgment of you, as she has done concerning all those who have preceded you. And then you can prepare no *Apology* unless while you are alive you value much more the judgment of the Church on your writings than you do your own; and that is what the learned and saintly fathers, many of them, were wont to do. Did not St. Augustine, even in his old age, revise many things, and did not St. Jerome do the same? For it is evident that both of them wrote differently at different periods; and it is a far different thing to refute adversaries in the heat of discussion than it is to do so when they are quietly endeavoring to interpret some passage of Scripture. If you will follow the example of these two you will stop the mouths of your retractors and win immortality for many of your works which would otherwise be exposed to a great risk, because there are in them many things which offend the erudite. So here you have my opinion about what

[26] Romans xii, 20.

your adversaries are doing to you. Again, some time ago, you translated some fragments of Origen on St. Matthew, wherein many passages are found which, even if they were Origen's, yet are offensive to the learned because they express an opinion about the dominical bread, provided that he means by that term the Eucharist, different from that of the early fathers and remote from any that the Church ever held, the which, if it really be Origen's and not that of one of his rivals, has been repudiated by all the ancients. Therefore, I would much prefer them to remain untranslated than to have them translated and seemingly approved by you; especially in these tempestuous times when there is so much discord on the matter amongst these new sects. For these people write that such passages seem to refer more to the blessed bread which was wont to be distributed on Sundays to the people by the priest than that they pertained to the majesty of the Lord's body. Therefore, I would advise you to testify in your writings that your judgment agrees with that of the Church in this matter rather than to leave with posterity a suspicion about your opinion concerning these passages long since translated by you. Many of Origen's ideas have been vexing to the ancients; for, if this were not so, some one of the orthodox fathers, I think, would have translated them for us before to-day. I have advised you already about castigating the *Colloquies,* since there are many of them which are offensive to the educated, namely, those on fasting, on ceremonies, on the decrees of the Church, on the eating of fish, on pilgrimages, on the invoking of the saints in time of danger, which they accuse you of assailing by turning them into ridicule. Those of them that are of such a nature you can easily amend, so that you thus prevent every chance of being blamed.[27]

So here we have the candid opinion of Tunstall, who was no bigoted zealot but a man of varied learning, a humanist in the best acceptation of that much abused term, a courtier whose sterling ability had served to advance him to the highest offices, both ecclesiastical and civil, and, last but not least, a man whose opinion Erasmus had learned by years of friendly fellowship to value. We believe it is not too much to assume that Tunstall in this letter represented the feelings of the court, the clergy, the two Universities, and the educated classes of England generally in their attitude towards Erasmus and his writings. Now for the testimony of Sadoleti, which will give us the attitude of the Roman Curia. Sadoleti was all that Tunstall was with regard to learning and the humanities; and it would be hard indeed to find among all the friends of Erasmus any who were actuated by purer motives for the welfare of the Church and, at the same time, who entertained a more genuine regard for the fame of Erasmus, than these two men. This is how Sadoleti sought very courteously but very directly to bring him to a realization of his conduct:

. . . One thing I would ask of you, for what should hinder me

[27] Eras. Ep. (EE) p. 126.

from performing the same friendly duty which I would ask from yourself? There is one thing, I repeat, that I desire, and which I vehemently urge you to do, that is, that you restrain yourself from entering into every sort of recrimination, and that in your writing you avoid saying things which, although they may not be contrary to true piety, yet are not in accordance with the long-received opinions of the people, and aggravate the zeal of certain men and even certain Orders whom I deem it of the greatest importance not to oppose. What makes you, a man who excels in the highest degree in all kinds of learning, fight with persons who are not your equals in these altercations and quarrelings of yours, especially while the field of sacred literature lies wide open to you on every hand where you can exercise and display at will all the riches of that genius of yours, your gifts which men admire and about which there is none to trouble you? Now whatever I am here saying I am writing with the sincerest and most friendly intentions, and because I earnestly desire such great worth as is in you to be free from, I will not say, taint, but even from the very suspicion of taint, in the minds of the multitude; but you understand this better than I can express it. Dear Erasmus, let us both to the utmost of our power lend virile assistance to the tottering Christian faith which, as you yourself can see, is now dominated not only by the wicked and criminal multitude who are overruning everything, but is also being attacked by external and internal enemies and all the devices of war and wickedness, and is ready to fall unless God, who alone is omnipotent, shall support and sustain it. To which God and Lord, if we attempt to return the thanks we ought, we shall find our life pleasing and our labor not useless nor devoid of profit to others. Although in truth you do not need this exhortation, we ought to be the more on our guard not to desert our post. But enough of this.[28]

This is kindly and well meant on the part of Sadoleti, and carries Erasmus away far enough to make him admit his folly in attacking the Orders and bristling up at every petty assault of every sort of opponent. But, having made a general admission, he spoils it by beginning to color it and so attenuate it that, at last, he is maintaining his first position with almost obnoxious pertinacity. He thus replies to Sadoleti after observing the usual epistolary courtesies:

. . . It seems to have displeased you that in my writings I have attacked the Orders, or the members thereof who are preëminent in dignity, unless my memory is defective, for your remarks which I read cursorily I do not exactly recall. What may have escaped me at times I know not; but certainly it was never my intention to injure in my writings any class of people, or any Order, unless, perchance, it hurts an Order to be admonished about those matters which add

[28] Eras. Ep. (LB) col. 1266E-1267B.

to the welfare of any Order, and increase both its authority and dignity. For instance, the dignity of the Theological Order consists in seriously and reverently treating the Sacred Scriptures, leaving all frivolous claptrap aside, and in having their manners accord with their profession. The dignity of the Monastic Order consists in excelling the rest of the multitude by a sincere piety, after having truly mortified their human affections. The dignity of Princes consists in this, that they keep themselves as free as possible from the exercise of every kind of tyranny. The dignity of Bishops is, that they approach as nearly as possible the virtues of Christ and the Apostles. He who admonishes as to these things by assailing those who disgrace their profession so little injures an Order that, in my opinion, he is earnestly promoting the honor and profit of the Order. And, lest what is at times said against the degenerate ones might be taken as condemnation of all, I frequently entreat the reader not to consider that what is spoken against the wicked few appertains to all. But perhaps I err in this, that I entreat the reader too frequently or too vehemently.[29]

It was useless. Sadoleti had evidently desired to give him some good and friendly advice, but it only aggravated him. However, he seems to realize to whom he is writing, compelled, as it were, almost against his will, to recognize Sadoleti's sincerity and unselfishness; and a better mood takes possession of him for a time:

And yet I am unwilling to have recourse to evasion, and I acknowledge some of the fault to be mine: I have abused the tranquillity of this age; I have yielded to the flatteries and applause of my friends; would that it were possible to begin over again! I did not deem that there was such morose sensitiveness in the characters of men. Meanwhile I am trying to bring it about that I shall offend no one, especially in those works of mine which treat of matters of faith and piety, proposing you to myself as an example of moderation. I conjecture that these same people have been a source of trial to you, too, with their complaints. For where do they not reach? Whose mind do they not weary? Whose ears do they not tire with their tale-bearing, and that of the emptiest?[30]

In his next letter to Sadoleti he continues in much the same tone:

Your views coincide with those of Cuthbert Tunstall, an English bishop, late of London, but now of Durham, for he is wont to sing the same song that you are now singing. . . . Indeed, I value his judgment highly and have yielded to his opinion in many things. . . . However, now to that part of your letter in which you admonish me to treat the barkings of the hounds with silent contempt, or, at least, to refute them without a display of anger. But I am unwilling, my best of friends, that you should deem me to assert that I have been entirely without fault in the matter, and that you are admonishing me uselessly and for no reason whatsoever; but

[29] *Ibid.*, col. 1256D-F.

[30] *Ibid.*, col. 1258C-D.

> that you should excuse me and the more easily pardon me for what errors I have hitherto been guilty of in that regard. . . . I will suffer, dear Sadoleti, with the most unruffled mind, to be admonished by such as you with rebukes or even boxes on the ear, so far am I from being offended by your kind admonitions, but would be offended indeed if you did not admonish me very freely. For Cuthbert Tunstall, like you in all else, excels you in this: that he reprehends me most freely when anything in my writings displeases him; for he has a very intimate knowledge of my mind and disposition, gained from the close relationship of our dwelling together.[31]

This was certainly a softened mood for Erasmus. He had just heard incidentally that Pope Clement had been about to confer on him a benefice but had been turned from his purpose by hearing of Erasmus' uncertain attitude towards the Church, although, with his natural propensity to attribute his misfortunes to the machinations of his enemies whether imaginary or real, he claimed that he had been calumniated to the Pontiff by those who wished him ill. Aleander is undoubtedly here meant, but he hesitated to name him to Sadoleti, who knew him as well as Erasmus did. He seems to have felt the disappointment about this benefice quite keenly, but maintains a grave front. So he continues his letter to Sadoleti:

> Concerning the rich *living* that Pope Clement was going to bestow on me at your request had not his intention been changed by the calumnies of certain persons, I must gratefully express to you my thanks; however, as far as it relates to my mode of life, it will not much diminish my income; for, were I anxious for such hunting spoils, the kindness of the Emperor, of the King of England, and of the King of France has already offered me more than I could desire, even were I most avaricious. . . . What they have told Clement I know not; but this I do know, that if my sentiments, as well as the things I have done and suffered, were as evident to the Supreme Pontiff as they are apparent to God the searcher of hearts, he would be somewhat more kindly disposed towards Erasmus than he is to certain persons who are crying out so tumultuously. Had I longed for mitres and riches I should long since have been deploring the task which I had uselessly assumed; now I feel that I have not lost much, provided that my service has been approved by the Supreme Judge.[32]

Then he occupies more than half of this long letter in giving an account of all his enemies, and the pros and cons of the various controversies from which few of his letters of this period are free. Ill health and opposition from so many sources had strained his nerves almost to the snapping point, so that he nursed his grievances like a wayward and fretful child. So tense had his emotions become that a harsh criticism drove him wild, while, on the other hand, a kind word

[31] *Ibid.*, col. 1270A-C, 1271B-C. [32] *Ibid.*, col. 1271C-E.

melted him almost to tears. He closes his letter to Sadoleti as follows:

> . . . Reading the closing paragraph of your letter, I had hard work to keep from weeping for joy, wherefore it is all the pleasanter to repeat your words here. "Dear Erasmus," you say, "I want you to feel assured that, poor as I am, and hardly used by Fortune, there is nothing of mine which is not equally yours. And not in that alone, but in everything which makes for the protecting of your dignity and reputation my intention is always to manifest towards you the highest confidence and friendly good will, both of my own accord, and when requested by yourself. . . ." For my part, I feel abundantly enriched by you when I am allowed to enjoy your incomparable friendship. My own circumstances are very straitened, but, as they say, "small birds need not many feathers." I am content with very little and if I need anything there are those who are eager and willing to share what they have with me. But, believe me, I hold your letter dearer than if you had sent me a talent of gold.[33]

With such friends as Sadoleti and Tunstall, we can easily see what kept Erasmus from going over to Luther, even had not his convictions been opposed. He seems to have feared poverty very much, as would only be natural; and this matter of Church *livings* was regarded with pleasurable anticipation by everyone. Simon Riquinus writes to him at this period a letter accompanying a valuable cup which his master Herman the Elector had sent him from Cologne. He also adds:

> We are watching out sedulously for a *living,* so that we may not disappoint your hopes in the matter. You know that the falling out of such things is carefully scanned in the courts of princes. If you were here on the spot, the affair would have been arranged according to your wishes long ago.[34]

Returning to the matter of his resentment of criticism and the attempts that his well-wishers made to bring him to take no notice of adverse comment, we may mention another of his friends who labored with him to lead his too sensitive mind away from these annoyances. This was Udalric Zasius, of whom we have already spoken. His letter is of the same period of which we are treating:

> . . . I cannot but grieve, great Erasmus, that you are vexed by men of little importance to the extent that you feel compelled to dispute with them. . . . Now why do you so greatly humble them, or take notice of them, or even fear them? In truth, if such persons as are hostile to you inveighed against me, I would so despise them that I would not even speak to them, much less let them cross the threshold of my door or partake of my hospitality. You are placed beyond the reach of envy, and are of such an illustrious reputation that whosoever dares to assail your name is immediately by the

[33] *Ibid.,* col. 1274B-C.

[34] Eras. Ep. (EE) p. 135.

consent of all learned men frowned down upon. . . . Therefore, let your virtue, your supreme learning, your spotless integrity, console, renew, refresh, sustain, and hearten you, and care not at all for the lies of paltry fellows.[35]

It was sad to see this great man so prostrated by the Iliad of his woes, which became the more acute by dwelling on them, and on which his morbid mentality could not help but dwell. This is the curse of the neurasthenic, that he seems to take a pleasure in self-torture. And this was now so evident in his writings that people who had never seen him could not understand him, although they suspected that something was wrong with him. It was not given to all to understand him as did Sadoleti and Tunstall, nor even as did Zasius and Alciati. This latter felt compelled to arouse Erasmus to a better, more manly, and more noble frame of mind, for in a letter in October of this same year he writes:

. . . But come, most noble Erasmus, let us consider carefully how you might exercise that Nemesis of yours more moderately, or at least how you might in some way or other dispense with it. I observe you to be so much carried away with it that there is rarely a letter of those which you have written during the last four years whence this thing does not burst out. But why need I mention your letters when you have already issued and published so many *Apologies,* and with such fruitful increase, that you seem to be another Alcinous in whose gardens apples upon apples spring. But what has it availed you, I ask you? Have you crushed your rivals thereby? Not any more than hornets are when they are stirred up, until at length you find by experience that you must employ some more severe method of terrorizing them, or that not even that will check them. But you cannot find any means more severe, for neither were the ancient fathers Tertullian, Cyprian, Jerome, nor Augustine able to find any such. Why not, therefore, give up all this useless labor, and show the greatest contempt for all these people who find their pleasure in gnawing upon something? . . . You see then how much more satisfactory it would be to decide on your course once for all, and in future to avenge yourself by silence. Otherwise, what will be the end of the matter?[36]

If for want of space we quote no more along these lines, it is not that the material is lacking. And Erasmus himself realized that he was only making matters worse by showing to the world his extreme sensitiveness in these annoyances, and that his enemies, both Evangelical and Catholic, were quick to take advantage of his weakness and bait him all the more. As evidence of this we may adduce his letter to Cardinal Campegio in September of this year:

. . . As often as I engage with the forces of the enemy, immediately someone comes up behind me and inflicts a fatal wound,

[35] Eras. Ep. (LB) col. 1748B-D. [36] *Ibid.,* col. 1322D-E, 1323F.

> I wrote the *Diatribe,*[37] whereupon uprose Stunica with his inferences. I wrote my *Hyperaspistes,* and lo! there came Bedda with his virulent calumnies. I wrote against Vulturius [Gerard Geldenhauer] and Bucer, and thereupon appeared Alberto Pio, who added to what he had already published against me an entire volume, in which he assembled together from my entire writings whatever seemed to border on condemned dogmas.[38]

In this famous Cardinal, we may note in passing, Erasmus recognized the power behind the throne at the Vatican; and so we can better appreciate the way in which he proceeds to throw himself on the generosity of this celebrated and influential diplomat:

> . . . If any tumult arises, I shall be amongst the first victims of the conquerors, although I would readily suffer that than be torn from the camp of the Catholic Church. I have collected no disciples, and have yielded to no sect, and have preferred to endure, old and sick as I am, so much hostility and danger, rather than to depart from the company of the orthodox by a finger's breadth. So let me admit that in my many books I might have written something thoughtlessly, yet my intentions might have at least merited more favor. I know that, whatever Pio Alberto does, he is aided and assisted by Jerome Aleander, who has no reason to wish me ill, but has many for which he ought to wish me well; for when he was poor my commendations advanced him, and on many occasions afterwards I made honorable mention of him. I have deemed it proper to pour these matters into the breast of you, my only patron, from whom I have ever experienced kindness, etc., etc.[39]

This was a clever stroke of policy if Erasmus meant it as such, for Aleander was the only rival that Campegio had in the field of ecclesiastical diplomacy. But we must turn to other matters.

[37] *De libero arbitrio.*
[38] Eras. Ep. (LB) col. 1316F-1317A.
[39] *Ibid.,* col. 1317B.

CHAPTER XXII

LOSS OF FAVOR WITH EMPEROR; ATTACKS FROM ALL SIDES: DISCOURAGEMENT

The year 1531 began with no cheering gleams of coming peace or concord to dispel the clouds of acrimonious conflict. The Emperor had still too many political crises to overcome to give much time or attention to the religious controversies which were rending Christendom, and of many of these difficulties the arbitrament of war seemed to be the only solution. All war Erasmus rightly deplored, and the prospect of it rendered him gloomy and despondent. Latterly he seemed to have lost whatever personal regard he may have entertained for the Emperor and to have fixed his hopes more on the friends that he had made among the upper ranks of the hierarchy. He was glad that he had not been compelled to attend the Diet of Augsburg, for there he would have had to show exactly where he stood, which he never desired to do so openly. On the other hand, he was somewhat piqued that the Emperor had not summoned him to attend the Diet in his capacity of Imperial Councilor, which, coupled with the fact that his salary had not been paid him for a long time, might indicate that he was not in great favor with the Emperor. This made him give loose rein to his suspicions that some divines who were present with the Emperor had done him evil offices with that august personage. It is to this that he alludes when writing to Wolfgang Remus:

> . . . I could not have gone there [Augsburg] without the greatest risk to my life, and I preferred to live. Then, too, I plainly saw that if I went there I should only bring new tragedies on my head instead of calming these long-standing dissensions. I was well aware on whose judgment the Emperor would rely, nor was I blind to the fact that there were there present the kind of theologians that would set any man down to be worse than a Lutheran who should dare to open his mouth for the promotion of piety. And I am by nature impatient of pretense and somewhat free of speech; and if I had attuned myself to the sentiments of certain people I should have to say many things that were contrary to my conscience. So that, in a way, I am not sorry that I was sick, since on that account I had a good reason to absent myself. But the Lord will not suffer His bark to be buried by the waves, no matter how this sea may rage.[1]

When he saw himself thus held in poor favor by each side to the never-ending conflict and knew that even his personal safety was in

[1] Eras. Ep. (LB) col. 1348F-1349A.

question, we need have no doubt that he was often prompted to exclaim, "A plague on both your houses," or its pre-Shakespearian equivalent. There he was in the open space between the frowning battlements of both parties, an object of suspicion to each until he would declare for either, too fearful of personal consequences to make a whole-hearted choice, but all the time conscious as to where his allegiance lay. All he could say in the circumstances he said to Juan Maldonado: "Those in favor of the new sects are fortifying themselves with such eagerness against the coming of the Emperor that, if I were to regard nothing else but my safety, I should hesitate on which side to be." [2]

There seems to have been a lull in the correspondence between Sir Thomas More and Erasmus about this time. This was probably due to the fact that, after the fall of Cardinal Wolsey and the devolving of his duties as Chancellor of the Kingdom on More, at the urging of King Henry, More's time was too much occupied to attend to much of his more intimate correspondence. This seems to have incited his family to assume the duty of writing to Erasmus and of keeping him in touch with English matters. Erasmus had sent his portrait painted by Holbein to them, and More's talented daughter Margaret sent him a letter in Latin classic enough to rejoice the heart even of a scholar like himself, acknowledging the gift gratefully. He seems to have been very fond of More's children, and to the eldest son he dedicated the works of Aristotle in Greek, which he had just put through Froben's press. He had also been corresponding with Lord Mountjoy's son Charles, an apparently estimable young man, to whom he dedicated the works of Livy. His dedication contains some remarks of interest to scholars:

> . . . I thought it good to dedicate to you Titus Livy, . . . now augmented by the five books of this author which Simon Grynaeus, a man learned without ostentation in every branch of literature, and born for the promotion of the liberal arts, found by some lucky chance in the library of the monastery of Laurissenus, or as it is commonly called, Lorsensis [Lorsch]. This monastery is near Worms, otherwise known as Borbotomagus, which is on the other side of the Rhine; it was built by Charlemagne seven hundred years and more ago, and endowed with a most copious collection of books, for this latter item was formerly the principal care of princes, and is wont to be regarded as the dearest possession of monasteries. This copy was of wonderful antiquity, written, according to the ancient custom, letter after letter, so that it would have been most difficult to separate word from word unless it were done by one who was learned, careful, and used to that sort of thing. Hence it was quite a task to prepare a copy for the use of the printers, nor was there any less watchfulness than conscientiousness displayed lest the compositors might depart from the copy in any way. Now, if it was a subject for great congratulation by the studious when Mainz furnished us a fragment only of Livy, with how much pleasure ought we to receive this present accession to his *History,* etc.[3]

[2] *Ibid.,* col. 1349E.

[3] *Ibid.,* col. 1359A-C.

In a short time he was again in trouble on account of having made some invidious remarks about the town of Nuremburg, its magistrates, its University, and the character of its students, which roused Eoban Hess, one of the said professors hitherto friendly with Erasmus, to come to the defense of his University and all connected with it. As usual Erasmus very skillfully avoids the issue by saying that Hess had not quite comprehended the drift of his remarks, that he (Erasmus) did not know anything of the professors personally and could consequently not be accused of animus, and that if he said anything about the students it was only meant to stimulate them to study. Then he tries to disarm Hess's anger by blaming this whole matter on the supineness of the Lutherans when he says: "Whence comes this languor for study? Why, from the laziness of some who make a boast of being Evangelicals." [4] It is probable, however, that the vanity of Hess had been piqued because he had not been mentioned in the *Ciceronianus,* and to this charge Erasmus makes a very reasonable defense. However, his remarks about the town in general raised up for him a number of unnecessary enemies.

But nothing could cure him of this propensity to provoke people unnecessarily. Budé had some time ago cut him off from the list of his friends, and had allowed two letters of his to remain unopened. This was a severe blow, for in his heart he respected and admired the learning of that talented Frenchman. Still he obstinately refused to see that the fault for these happenings was his own. Writing to Baptist Egnatius, he complains that "My condition would be more tolerable if I had to fight with only one band of enemies, but now, while I am combating at close quarters with these, another band of the very ones for whom I am fighting attacks me from the rear." [5] Nicholas Mallarius tried to cheer him up by telling him that there were many people of literary tastes in his neighborhood who consoled themselves for not having been permitted to look upon Erasmus by kissing little bronze images of him, and thus inciting themselves to an increased ardor for study. To this Erasmus gloomily replied, "There is a certain divine at Constance who has my picture in his study for no other reason than that he may spit on it as he walks by it, and, on being questioned whence his hatred springs, replies that it was due to me that he had to endure this calamitous era." [6] Let us give another instance of his rash way of talking which caused him so much of hatred and censure. After making the general statement one time that there were people who would exile literature and the languages to Numidia or the infernal regions, if they could have their way, he goes on to say, "Indeed, among

[4] *Ibid.,* col. 1364E.

[5] *Ibid.,* col. 1366F.

[6] *Ibid.,* col. 1387C-D. Although this seems incredible, it is still possible. He was the best-hated man in Europe, and this for the reasons which the present work has rendered obvious. There is on my desk, as I write, a copy of his *De conscribendis epistolis,* printed at Lyons in 1543, seven years after his death, in which his name has been obliterated wherever it appeared. As it was printed, among other places, at the head of each alternate page and the book contains three hundred and sixty pages, we can realize what a labor of hate it was to ink out the detested name wherever it occurred.

our own countrymen, there are those of so dense a mind who have nearly persuaded the people that there is no difference between a man learned in Latin and Greek, and a heretic." Whether or not he is here referring to the Hollanders we shall leave to their decision; but if he is alluding to the Brabanters his charge is distinctly untrue. He seems to have forgotten for the moment that College of the Three Languages which he himself was so instrumental in founding according to the instructions of its dead benefactor Jerome Busleiden, and of which Hallam, in treating of the Renaissance, says:

> This foundation produced a crowd of men distinguished by their erudition and their talents. Louvain, by means of its Collegium Trilingue, raising itself to a more exalted rank than that which Deventer had occupied in the fifteenth century, became not only the principal seat of literary knowledge in Belgium, but also a centre from which it spread into different parts of Germany.[7]

As the reader knows, that part of Belgium known as Brabant was included with the various states of the Netherlands under the same ruler, with Louvain as its leading University; and, if what Hallam says about its influence on the neighboring Germany be true, it cannot help but have been of the utmost benefit to the Dutch states which were so much nearer.

> Not only was this *Collegium Trilingue* founded for the teaching of the three learned tongues, but also for the literary criticism which, with polemics, forms the distinctive character of the intellectual occupations of the sixteenth century. The history of the lives and works of the professors of this college is in some sort the history of Erasmus himself, as also that of the most celebrated humanists who continued his school. The names of the professors of Latin, Barland, Goclen, Nannius, Justus Lipsius, Putanus, Vernulaeus; of Greek, Rescius, Amerot, Thierry de Langhe, Gérard de Coursele, Zoesius, Stockmans; and of Hebrew, Matthew Adrian, the two Englishmen Robert Wakefield and Robert Shirwood, Campensis, Gennep, and Valerius Andreas [many of them Dutchmen], are cited with eulogy by the historians of the Renaissance and of literary criticism.[8]

Even Erasmus at times grew enthusiastic over what Louvain and its numerous correlated institutions were accomplishing for education. In 1521 he says:

> The University of Louvain yields to no other university for the number of its students, except Paris. The students amount to about three thousand, and there is an influx of new ones daily.[9]

Now, such being the case, the country could not well escape partaking in the general benefits that such an intensive diffusion of knowledge

[7] Hallam, *Intro. to the Lit. of Europe*, Vol. I, p. 271.
[8] Van der Essen, *L'Université de Louvain, 1425-1707*, pp. 23-4.
[9] Eras. Ep. 1221.

must needs have produced; for three thousand young men educated in this way and spread over Holland and Belgium from time to time would lift that portion of Europe far beyond the reach of any such aspersion as that of Erasmus which we have quoted above. But it was this rashness of statement which was the Nemesis that had continually confronted him at the most unexpected and unwished-for moments. It had followed him from Basle to Freiburg, and was now again threatening to overtake him. How greatly he feared its effects we may glean from a letter of his to Edingus Andomarus:

> Now for the first time I am sick to surfeit of Germany. I know whom I ought to avoid, but whom I ought to follow I fail to see. Flanders comes into my mind often, but I doubt that it would be safe for me on account of the mendicant tyrants. Maria, former Queen of Hungary, who has taken Princess Margaret's place, as I hear, is well disposed towards me. But if she were to do anything which, I will not say the Catholics but the zealots, did not like, they would say that I had instilled something into her ear, even if I had been dissuading her from it. Nor could she protect me from those who are armed with the authority of both the Pope and the Emperor. I hope you are not experiencing the same sort of things that some of the other states are, where the disturbance of so many sects destroys all tranquillity; or where all things are permitted to the Evangelicals, while others are compelled to do things which they do not approve of. Certainly force is not Evangelical. I plainly fear that, while some are Lutherans, others Zwinglians, and still more Anabaptists, we shall all become Turks when fighting with the Turks, though I hope this prophecy may prove vain. I pray for you a tranquil life; but, for myself, I must fall in this gladiatorial arena into which some of my friends have thrust me in spite of myself.[10]

So we can judge from this his disturbed state of mind and his inability to decide where he had better go. And he never stopped to think that he was the only man in Europe in such evil case, in that he had brought these conditions on himself. His best friends saw their counsel rejected, and that at times when he most needed counsel. Julius Pflug, Bishop of Naumburg and secretary to Duke George of Saxony, had tried to advise him for his good along the same lines that Tunstall, Sadoleti, and so many others had tried:

> I am much beholden to you for sending me your book, the which I eagerly welcome, as I should any gift coming from so great a man; although I grieve that your honorable old age is troubled by one person or another, and that you are summoned from your quiet studies to strife of this sort. . . . However, there are not a few, and those of the best and most eminent standing, who acknowledge the good you have done for us, and consider that a true and just reward should be granted to your virtue. While such

[10] Eras. Ep. (LB) col. 1400D-E.

> as these respect you and hold you in high regard, you ought to be able so to rest in their friendship that you could easily despise the talk of the envious. . . . On you alone are centered the eyes of all who desire peace. Since the immortal God has endowed you with both the authority and the ability, so that now you alone are the person able to cure these evils, and so to bring it about that our rulers shall be persuaded of the possibility of putting an end to religious controversy, God approving thereof, provided that those things which may be changed by the sanction of the Church are relaxed, and will also consider that the laws and constitutions of men ought to be altered when the Church is passing through such a tempest. Now, if this were brought about by you, perhaps on the other side some good man who is not averse to Christian concord, such as Melancthon, might be so wrought upon as to to exercise his influence among those of his party, so that they might decide on many matters which in themselves ought not to be borne, but, out of consideration for this present crisis, might well be endured.[11]

We will certainly all agree that Pflug was giving Erasmus some very good advice here, in view of the dreadful religious animosities which have raged among Christian people during the last four hundred years. But Erasmus was no prophet of God, and we cannot be sure that he had even the average vision of the future which is granted in more or less degree to most men. To Pflug's very simple proposition of directly approaching Melancthon or some other of the sincere followers of Luther who for the sake of peace would make and accept mutual concessions, Erasmus made no direct answer, but took refuge in platitudes, not forgetting to have a fling at the monks. He tells Pflug what the latter already knew, that this was a most furious century, and that everything and everybody was insane. He skilfully dodges the office which Pflug wishes him to assume of approaching the other side with concrete and acceptable offers, and begins to recount the history of the troubles instead of offering his own quota to the solution of the problem. But we must not do him an injustice, for he did bring forward once more the plan which Pope Adrian VI had declined as being ineffectual. Then he wanders off into generalities, saying that he is too old, that the fates will find a way to settle matters, and that he hopes that he will live long enough to see it. From this he goes on to air his grievances about Alberto Pio and the Franciscans, and then proceeds to speak about the doings of some members of the Dominican Order, which offers him an occasion to bring up at great length the whole question of the Monastic Orders, and what he said about them at the end of his *Enchiridion*. Returning finally to the matter at issue, he tells Pflug that if he were to interfere in the way Pflug desired he would only get himself into trouble like an old monk named John, who, finding himself by chance in a theatre where gladiatorial shows were being given, and taking the thing for stern reality, rushed between the combatants crying, "Brothers, what are you doing, and why do you try to kill each

[11] *Ibid.*, col. 1401A-D.

the other without cause?"—and while thus trying to separate them was himself killed by inadvertence. The story leads him to become reminiscent, and he recalls that in the combat between Hector and Achilles several outsiders were similarly hurt. So here we at last reach his real reason for refusing to do what Pflug wished him to do; he was afraid of getting hurt. Poor Erasmus! Unheroic Erasmus to the last degree! Not for him the glory of leading a forlorn hope; he saw no glory in defeat. Horace, running away from the battle of Philippi and throwing down his shield, excites our laughter, in which he himself joins with disarming spontaneity, making no virtue of his lack of bravery; Erasmus shuns the battle from similar lack of courage, but would not have us believe so for the world.

He had now been two years in Freiburg; but for some reason which he fails to mention he feels that he must leave it, even though he had only so recently arrived. This probably had something to do with an uncomfortable state of affairs connected with his occupying the old palace of Maximilian, of which we have spoken. There were other tenants besides him, as it appears, and there was evidently some friction between them. One of these fellow-tenants was a priest formerly of Augsburg, who seems to have been in possession of part of the mansion when Erasmus arrived. After several months of mutual possession, some feeling appears to have arisen between them which degenerated into an effort by each party to evict the other. But it would seem that the priest had the law on his side, being able to show that he had hired the whole mansion, and hence that Erasmus was a tenant on sufferance. This destroyed the illusion that he was living there on the generosity of King Ferdinand; but that was not the worst, for the legal luminary whom the town of Freiburg employed for the protection of its rights sent to Erasmus by the hand of Glareanus a letter from the royal treasurer, in which he stated that His Majesty desired Erasmus to move out by the twenty-fourth day of June; and the aforesaid luminary took the occasion to make a demand for twenty florins as rent for the past year, to which he later added ten more to bring it up to date.[12] We must assume from this that Erasmus had become unpopular at Freiburg. His next move was to try to have the council of the town of Besançon, then a free city of the Empire, invite him to come and dwell in their midst:

> Magnificent and most honorable masters. When the alteration in affairs at Basle compelled me to leave that old and hence pleasing refuge, I was reflecting about migrating to Besançon, having experienced on occasion the kindness of your body and that of the canons. The canons informed me that at that moment there was some disturbance there of what kind I know not, and that it would be better for me to defer my coming for a while. This I did, and at the written request and with the approbation of King Ferdinand, I betook myself to Freiburg near at hand, where now for two years I have lived in friendly relations with all, but particularly with the Uni-

[12] *Ibid.*, col. 1427.

versity. Nor have I been a burden to anyone, maintaining myself at my own cost. But now that I perceive all things to be in a state of suspense, with forebodings of war and tumults (which I trust will not eventuate), I should prefer to be anywhere rather than at Freiburg in case anything should happen. For to this town have come, and are still coming, all who have left Basle from hatred of the sects for the reason that they have been suspected by the latter of instigating several monarchs to have recourse to arms for a settlement of the religious question. The town itself is elegant and pleasant, but there is a scarcity of goods; and, moreover, my aged frame and poor state of health require many little luxuries, particularly Burgundy wine, since these German wines disagree with my stomach terribly. When, however, I have it imported here in spite of the great expense, they either send me what I have not ordered, or it is spoiled by the carters. I trust indeed that all things will remain tranquil; but if anything disagreeable should occur, I should like to make use for a time of the hospitality of your town. No one will be put to inconvenience by me, for I have, thanks to the supernal powers, enough to care for my little wants. I have no connection with any sect, and I have no followers, except in common with Christ, nor shall I have, please God. I have said things about the vices of men which have offended certain morose individuals, when it were better that they had corrected their faults rather than criticize me for a well-meant warning. All I seek is a refuge and place of quietness for my declining years. I have been, and am still, invited to other places with splendid attractions, but it is not my intention to pass beyond the boundaries of the dominion of the Emperor, whose remarkable favor has stood by me hitherto against the endeavors of my enemies. If in your wisdom you deem it of importance, I can most readily obtain, both from the Emperor and King Ferdinand, commendatory letters, although such is your kindness that I do not think there is need either of their letters or my own. Yet on account of the varying opinions of men, and their different feelings, I thought it wise to do nothing in the matter without first ascertaining your sentiments, for without your approbation I know not whether or not I should be able to find in your town a quiet abode. Therefore, your highnesses will not deem it too much trouble to reply to this letter in a few brief words, and I shall ever regard myself as your devoted servant, no matter what region shall possess Erasmus. May the Lord Jesus cherish you all and prosper your affairs. Freiburg, July 26, 1531.[18]

So he was obliged in this manner to beg for a place to reside, although at the time he was engaged in repairing a house in Freiburg which he had bought at an extortionate price. He tells his friend Ursinus Velius that he had had such a time with permits, contracts, stipulations, such running to and fro, such quarreling with dishonest workmen, and so on, that he would rather spend ten years writing books than one

[18] *Ibid.*, col. 1406B-1407C.

month swallowing such pills as these. He also says that there is a chance that he may have to leave his newly furnished house, as the plague is manifesting itself ominously near his neighborhood. Knowing his life-long dread of this pestilence, we feel it only natural that he should be looking out for a place of refuge in case that he were eventually driven from Freiburg by this terrible scourge. However, he did not leave Freiburg for Besançon at that time, so we may conclude that the plague abated. The next letter to his most intimate friend, Conrad Goclen at Louvain, gives what was after all the real reason for his wanting to leave Freiburg. He was living in constant fear lest something should happen to him, and this fear was producing in his mind insuperable obsessions. Suspicion, like a rank weed, was growing up so fast in his brain that it had all but choked his judgment. The list of his enemies, including those whom, whether justly or unjustly, he considered to be such, was ever uppermost in his mind, and he recited the roll to every correspondent whom he felt he could trust. To Goclen he writes:

> . . . I have now replied to the censures of the Sorbonne, and the book of which I send you a taste is almost entirely printed. And yet I had already replied to most of them. They are mostly Bedda's propositions. I was well aware of what that sworn brotherhood deserved; but I restrained my pen lest, being irritated beyond moderation, they might burn my books, which they would deem a good and proper proceeding, since Bedda, with a few of his conspiring friends, rules them, and has the president of the Parliament in his favor, as I am informed. The censures would not have appeared had not some of them wished to add oil to the flame. Eck was in Paris, and I assume, Aleander as well, whom I suspect to have gone thither principally for the purpose of attempting Erasmus' destruction; for I know just as well as I know I am living that he was the author of that book of Julius Scaliger's.[14] However, I must pretend not to know this, lest he rage worse against me on being found out. Bedda's friends, I am sure, will never cease. And yet Bedda, hostile as he is, has not approved of the publishing of this furious balderdash of Scaliger's. . . . Even now certain Evangelicals, of whom the ringleader is that abandoned Gueldrian, are striving with wonderful artifices to excite the minds of the Emperor and Ferdinand against me. At Strassburg they have printed a book in German against his Imperial Majesty, and they cite the authority of Erasmus in many passages, taken, as I suspect, from my adage *The Scarab and the Eagle,* and from my preface to *Suetonius.* I have no doubt that it is Capito and Bucer who are doing this, secretly aided perhaps by Eppendorff. I have not yet seen the book, but I learned of the affair to-day from a letter of the Cardinal of Trent, who presides over Ferdinand's Privy Council, and who is very friendly towards me. No one at Strassburg ever attempted anything against me until Noviomagus

[14] As we have seen, this was not true.

> [Geldenhauer] had moved to that city. He is now at Augsburg, where he is the Professor of Poetry at a salary, they say, of sixty florins. It is a good thing that two of the [Evangelical] leaders have perished, Zwingli in battle, and Oecolampadius shortly afterwards, of fever and abscess, for if the god of battle had favored them it would have been all over with us.[15]

And so he goes on for a whole page, filling the sheet with his suspicions and making insinuations about the motives and actions of his contemporaries, finally winding up his letter with the news that he had babbled to Caminga about Hayo Hermannus having contracted syphilis, and that probably Caminga had spoken of the fact in an unpleasant way to others, from whence he surmises that Hermannus might have taken offense. A more suspicious, malicious, futile, or childish letter surely never was written by any noble mind, and we are forced to the conclusion that the mind of Erasmus was being weakened by overwork, worry, and premature old age. Those unfortunate *Colloquies* were again causing him trouble at Louvain, where it seems that from one of them, namely, *Pietas puerilis,* he was accused of holding the same opinions concerning Confession and Fasting that Luther held. There is not much doubt that, when he wrote that colloquy several years before, he did entertain views similar to those expressed by the Reformer; and, when we think of what he was in his prime, the manner in which he now tries to explain them away is pitiful. The orthodoxy of his writings was so constantly being brought into question that some at length were afraid of having his books dedicated to them, as we learn from himself when he writes to Alfonzo Valdés, the Imperial Secretary:

> . . . I would long since have dedicated some one of my lucubrations to yourself, only that by this sort of attention some are pleased while others are offended; hence I often refrain from doing it for my best friends, so as not to stir up any unpleasantness for them.[16]

And so the year 1531 ended, leaving him with fewer friends but more enemies. He found it hard to live at peace with his neighbors, and even the young men who used to act as his amanuenses were not able to stand his petulance for very long. He was old and alone, and might have said with Macbeth:

> . . . my way of life
> Is fall'n into the sere, the yellow leaf;
> And that which should accompany old age,
> As honour, love, obedience, troops of friends,
> I must not look to have; but, in their stead,
> Curses, not loud, but deep, mouth honour, breath,
> Which the poor heart would fain deny, and dare not.
> (Shakespeare, *Macbeth,* Act V, Sc. 3.)

[15] Eras. Ep. (LB) col. 1421D-1422B. [16] *Ibid.,* col. 1426A.

CHAPTER XXIII

ADVICE OF FRIENDS; DEATH OF WARHAM; RECANTATION OF ERASMUS

All this time of trouble and turmoil must have materially lessened his literary output, but nevertheless he had managed to edit the works of St. Basil and bring them out in a beautiful Greek edition. It was to his old and really genuine friend Sadoleti that he dedicated it. This bishop, who might in his old age be surely called saintly, accepted the dedication with his usual courtesy, and took the opportunity to give Erasmus additional suggestion along the same lines that he had followed in his previous letter. After expressing his sorrow that Erasmus is being assailed by so many, he continues:

> . . . But if I were in your place I would make one final reply to everybody, partly excusing the acts and counsels of my youth, if, perchance, there were anything in my writings of those days which was too free, and partly retracting modestly and wisely things of that sort, even though they did not really, but only apparently, seem to furnish an excuse to envious tongues, just as we see the greatest doctors, most holy men, to have done; in a word, so showing my entire understanding of the Catholic faith that no one could have any doubt of what I believed. This work once published, I would maintain a perpetual silence towards the malevolent, whose insolent and unjust calumnies this itself and the truth, as well as your eminent fame and virtue, would refute.[1]

Excellent advice, if he would have taken it. There are some creatures of the air whose antennæ are so delicate that they vibrate to the faintest breeze. Erasmus' mental antennæ were so exquisitely subtle that the slightest sound of disapproval, the slightest breath of criticism, was torture to his nervous organization, and impelled him to frantic bursts of denial and defense, which were as ineffective as they were undignified. And it was an illogical desire to avoid the crushing humiliation to his pride that a retraction of his statements would undoubtedly cause him, with the consequent mental anguish from which he shrank, that made him spend so much of his valuable time in "Replies," "Apologies," and what not, in a vain attempt to save his face and disappoint his enemies. This was patent to everybody, and prompted his friends of all ranks to try to make him aware of his folly. Even Cardinal Cajetan, the typical Italian ecclesiastic, as Erasmus has so often and not very graciously depicted him in these letters, besought him, as so many others had done, to correct his works, retracting whatever was offensive in them, and acting towards fair criticism with more moderation. He always answered such appeals by admitting his faults; then,

[1] Eras. Ep. (LB) col. 1437E-1438A.

by a most perverse mental process, he would proceed to defend them. Thus he says to Cajetan:

> . . . Indeed your good will towards me is made more evident to me by the fact that you point out a reason for your prudent and friendly counsel, which is that I might be able to put a check on the suspicions and hatreds of men, while at the same time I am procuring for myself repose for my studies and my declining years against those who are railing at me. What your Eminence advises I have already of my own accord put into effect in large measure, having noted and corrected many passages in which there was undoubtedly an error either of my own or the printer's. Moreover, the moderation that you request I have already shown, in the opinion of everyone, when I was replying to the censures of the Parisian theologians which they recently issued in the name of the Faculty, but which were really the work of one restless spirit who is of such a character that he is barely tolerated in his own college.[2]

After giving Bedda this vicious slap, he proceeds to defend his works, as we have so often described before, and ends by telling the Cardinal that, though he had already decided to do what that eminent personage advised, he would now do it with the greatest alacrity, seeing that he had such an illustrious approver:

> . . . I had decided to collect together from my writings whatever was open to the calumnies and wicked opinions of certain people, then to interpret or emend such suspected passages so that the name of no man or no Order may be hurt by any imputation of mine. I am aware that some will make a victory for themselves out of this, and exclaim that Erasmus has been brought low; but that which is conducive to the tranquillity of the Church is far more important to me than what is conducive to my reputation. If I stand approved by Christ, and by you and your compeers who have combined true learning with true piety, I have conquered sufficiently. I do not long for dignities or benefices, creature of a day that I am; but it will be very gratifying to me if the Sovereign Pontiff favor me in this action, and show this favor by some outward manifestation.[3]

Even More, who knew better than many men Erasmus' extreme sensitiveness, made an appeal to his better nature, and did it with all the tenderness of a kind and gentle heart:

> . . . For if at times something moves certain people, who are neither wicked nor ignorant, to wish that you had restrained your pen when treating a particular subject, what does it greatly matter? since not only has this happened to every other writer, but also,

[2] *Ibid.*, col. 1446B-C.

[3] *Ibid.*, col. 1447A-B. It has often been said by some of his biographers that Erasmus spurned all dignities and benefices, but the last sentence of this letter surely contains the strongest kind of a hint that a good fat sinecure would not be displeasing to him.

while pointing out your faults, they themselves have been so unable to control themselves that they have fallen into the very same error, which has been more manifest than was befitting their honor, and more frequent than ought to appear in any work. Therefore, it is more difficult to pardon them, since they cannot be unaware how candidly you admitted that, before these pestilent heresies had arisen which in various localities are destroying everything, you had treated certain subjects in such a way that, had you been able to foresee that such enemies of religion as these were about to come forth, you would have treated such far more gently and less pungently, but which, as you had treated them at that time rather strongly, only served to stimulate the various vices of some persons which are esteemed to be virtues. He who would wish to attribute this to you as a fault will labor hard doubtlessly before he will find any satisfactory way to excuse the very holiest doctors of the ancient Church; for surely, if they saw this age of ours as they beheld their own, they would have made many statements each to his own age more cautiously and more clearly. Now, since they failed to do so, because while they were ministering to the evils which confronted them future evils did not enter their minds, the same thing happened to them, forsooth, that these people are now blaming you for. . . . Go on in the good work, Erasmus, but if anything moves the anxious solicitude of any good man, even without much need, let it not irk you to yield somewhat to his pious sentiments; but in all other regards pay no attention to the yelpings of the malevolent, but proceed on your way, helping learning, promoting virtue, without allowing yourself to be hindered. . . . Nor am I unaware how dangerous it is to admit amongst us these new kinds of errors; and, although they have been hitherto checked by the care of the bishops and the authority of the king, it is marvelous how artfully they have crept in at first, and with what boldness they are now endeavoring to rush in on us. Nor do two of our own people refrain from sending into this kingdom from Belgium, where they have betaken themselves as to a refuge, every kind of heresy, by means of books written in our language, in which they have translated the Scriptures badly and interpreted them worse. To the most of these we have made suitable replies, so that I do not greatly fear for a person who has read any of them, except that some men willingly and favorably peruse anything that is novel just from a feeling of levity, or anything that is pernicious just from a spirit of malice, so that they do not assent to it because they believe it to be true, but because they wish it to be true. But such a class of men, to whom it is a pleasure to be wicked, you can in no way satisfy. It is my desire, as far as I am able, to protect those who fall away from the truth, not of their own will, but owing to the adroit fallacies of others. Farewell, most learned Erasmus, and deserve well of polite learning. From our house at Chelsea, June 14, 1532.[4]

[4] Eras. Ep. (LB) col. 1440E-1441E.

Could anything be more gentle than this advice of More's, or more effective if followed? This was leading him up the difficult heights by word and example. But he would not follow, for he knew his weaknesses and felt that the higher he climbed the greater would be his fall. He was a far different Erasmus from the one that had foregathered with More thirty years before. Age and infirmity had changed him, and the joy of life was his no longer. It was now easier for him to indulge his querulousness than to change entirely his nature at this late day. So when again the hated name of Franciscan was brought to his notice, in spite of all his promises to Campegio, to Sadoleti, to Tunstall, and to so many others, he sat him down to his besetting foible and wrote the most malicious, satiric, and consistently offensive diatribe against the Franciscans that even his pen had ever perpetrated. We shall not go into it, for it is useless. Even More in this very letter told him that "certain people," meaning undoubtedly the monks, as under that term Erasmus used to allude to them, were "neither wicked nor ignorant," and surely More was in a position to know. But let us pass to something more pleasant. Writing to one of the young men whom he had formerly employed on a trip to England, but who was now Pensionary of the town of Haarlem, he sends him a very chatty letter which contains some matters of interest:

> . . . I am again engaged on that most distressing task of getting out the *Adages,* which are once more being printed. My work on the *Apothegms* I have amplified by two chapters. I have also enlarged my *Declarations.* The *Colloquies* are again in demand, *a work just as hateful to me as it is profitable to the publishers.*[5] *Jerome* is being printed at Paris, after being revised by me with incredible loss of rest, so that I have not had time to write more at length on the matters that you wished at this time. . . . You know, I suppose, that Lee has been made Archbishop of York, and that More has obtained permission from the king to resign the chancellorship at his own earnest entreaty. Perhaps he feared the hatred to follow in the event of the repudiation [of Queen Katherine] against which he has always advised. Canterbury [Warham] died in August, and there truly perished my sacred anchor. Aleander, adorned with a double mitre, for he is bishop of both Brindisi and Oretinus, is filling the office of English ambassador at the Imperial Court. My friends are growing fewer, while my enemies are increasing. I have now written to those to whom you wished me to write. You will make excuses for my bad conduct, and I will find excuses for the rest.[6]

There is more of this letter, but it does not readily lend itself to quotation on account of the very free tone Erasmus assumes towards women. This correspondent, Quirinus Talesius, had just married, a fact which gives Erasmus the opportunity to express his sentiments about women, sentiments which are not very elevated, but were possibly the ones that were current on the subject in his day. His remark about

[5] The italics are mine.

[6] Eras. Ep. (LB) col. 1456D-F.

how hateful the *Colloquies* have become to him is rather enlightening, although he does not express any present intention of removing from the text whatever has proved offensive. One reason for this may be that the sale of the book had been so great that it was too late to try to expunge the offensive portions. Another and perhaps a better reason was that, as he ever had an eye open for the main chance, their lucrative sale may at times have consoled him for the hostility they caused him. Things were certainly going against him in England, where Lee had been made Archbishop of York and the saintly and generous Warham had been called to his reward. As far as his limitations permitted him, he seems to have had a genuine affection for this venerable prelate, and was never tired of speaking his praises. Writing to Mountjoy's son Charles, he says:

> . . . I have written this sighing and weeping, and completely saddened at hearing that my incomparable hero William Warham is dead; nay, let me rather say, he has passed from this shadow of existence to a truly immortal life. I deplore the change, not for him but for myself, for he was truly a sacred anchor to me. We had entered into an agreement to die together, and he had promised a common sepulchre for us both; and I had no doubt that, although he was older than I by fourteen years, he would have survived me. Surely it was not old age nor disease that took him away from us, but an unlucky chance, not so much for himself indeed, but for learning, for religion, for the kingdom, and for the Church, such was his piety, his prudence in counsel, and his benignity in assisting everybody. Now his celestial soul reaps with Christ the supreme harvest of the good crop he planted here. And here am I, only half alive, a debtor to my promise, which, unless my mind deceives me, I shall fulfill in a short time. The agreement may have been made in joke, but the event will show that it was in earnest; for so much is my mind staggered by his death that I cannot steady it by any appeal to myself; and time, which is wont to heal the sharpest griefs, only serves to make my wound the worse. But why need I continue? I feel myself called; and it will be a pleasure to die with my incomparable and irrecoverable patron, provided, by the mercy of God, it may be permitted me to dwell with him above. He was a bright star of the Church; now, brighter still, he has gone to Heaven. Would that I, like a minute star, might be allowed to join my sun, etc.[7]

In spite of this loss, however, it was a busy year for him in a literary sense. Besides his task of correcting the works mentioned above, he also got out an edition of Terence, dedicated to the two brothers John and Stanislaus Boner, Polish noblemen. His preface to this work contains nothing of note, except the statement that most of the critics give more of praise to Terence than to Plautus; and he himself seems to adhere to the dictum that there is more of exact judgment in one comedy of Terence than in all of Plautus. He also seems to second the

[7] LB, Vol. II, col. IIII.

remark of Aristotle, that young men are unfit to study moral philosophy, as to the acceptance of which statement we shall leave the reader to decide.

And now, when the world least expected it, he sang his palinode and, saying he would never recant, recanted. Serious thoughts of the approach of death were beginning to occupy him, and we are compelled to the conclusion that, at least with regard to his obsession against the monks, his ideas at last began to appear in a different perspective. But one could not expect him to herald his change of heart to the world at large, especially considering the fiercely resentful attitude of so many towards him. Whatever his conscience urged on this score, he was still Erasmus and reserved to himself the right to mental reservations and gossamer explanations, if he felt himself being driven into a corner later on. But at this moment he seemed to see his duty clearly, and set himself to the task of undoing, as far as he was now able, some of the harm that his lifelong tactics of misrepresentation had caused. The occasion of all this was the dedication of one of the works of Haymo on the Psalms to John Emsted. Haymo was a monk of the monastery of Fulda who had lived in the ninth century, and who, besides performing the duties of administrator to the bishopric of Halberstadt, had found time to write commentaries on the Psalms, expositions on the works of St. Paul, and sketches of sacred history. John Emsted was a Carthusian monk of a monastery near Louvain, and was one of the circle of Erasmus' intimate acquaintances and friends at Louvain on whom he could depend in spite of his own many idiosyncrasies. It was to Emsted that he used to show the tenderer aspects of his nature, for it was to him that he wrote the touching letter on the death of Froben which we have already noted, and it was to him that he sent the affectionate epitaph which he wrote on the death of Dorp. All these men had really known that side of Erasmus which had never been shown to the world, and, out of consideration for his brilliant genius and his human aspects which were known to them alone, were ready to condone his failings no matter how pitifully he outraged the conventions of his times. So, while he was furiously assailing monks and monasticism in his writings and doing all in his power to blacken and defame them, the memory of his friend Emsted in his quiet cell was a constant and disquieting reminder that he was doing something which would not commend itself to the calm and perhaps wiser judgment of that gentle monk. Some feeling of this sort it must have been that prompted him to write him this following remarkable, but surely sincere, letter, by which he dedicated to him Haymo's *Explanatio . . . in Psalmos:*

> . . . For who does not love those men who, being truly dead to the world, have dedicated themselves to God; men whose life, whose conversation, is such that no one can depart from their presence and society without being the better for it; from whom one never fears trouble, or deceit, from those who hold money as rubbish and give what they have to the poor; who, according to the Gospel, pray not for revenge on their persecutors, but love those

who hate them, return good for evil; who are not a source of danger to the modesty of anyone because they themselves are clean of heart and body; who, on account of their singular humility, prefer themselves to none, envy none, despise none, but the nearer they approach to the summit of perfection, the more they deem themselves most unworthy; and, although they are the true jewels and flowers of the Church, yet call themselves but scum, minimize the lapses of others or interpret them favorably, while at the same time they are severe censors of their own acts; generously enlarge on the good deeds of others, but modestly make little of their own; flatter no one nor wound him with insulting words, and never slander the absent; from whose mouth nothing is heard except what is in the heart, namely, words of love, of consolation, of friendly admonition, and of thanksgiving? Theirs is a courtesy which is not counterfeit, but springs from a good conscience. Succinctly, they remind us of the celestial city, and represent, in a way, the choirs of angels, either because they continually chant the praises of God, or because, changed into spirits, they have no commerce with carnal affections; or because they live in complete concord; or because, acting as messengers between God and men just as the angels do, they commend the aspirations of the people to Him, and, by their assiduous prayers, obtain the greatest amount of good from Him, not for themselves alone, but for others. Furthermore, what if to these virtues is added the gift of prophecy, so that freely, purely, and without taint they may instruct the people, either by their spoken word, or by their writings, or by both? What, I say, if, crucifying their flesh by fasting, by midnight watchings, and by toil, as far as they are able, they supplement those things which Christ's sufferings lack, and, as it were, immolate themselves for the salvation of the people? And you, O layman, can you wish evil to those men who, while you are drunk and snoring, keep their midnight watches and fast for you; and, while you are provoking the wrath of God by your gambling, your lechery, and your other crimes, are beseeching Him in your behalf; and, while you are speaking ill of them before men, are speaking well of you before God? What man will not love and venerate such semi-supernal beings as these, divinely granted to us, as it were, for the benefit of all, even though he himself be a wretch? For distinguished virtue forces even its enemies to admire it. Those who merit well of no one are yet by a natural instinct reverent towards those who pour out their benefactions equally on the good and the bad. Therefore, what sort of perversity is it that some display who despise a man because he is a monk? When you mention the name monk you are speaking of one who is the sum of all the heroic virtues, one who merits benevolence and favor from the good, and wrests it from the wicked. If the name alone displeases, instead of a monk call him an upright and solitary man, if that seem better. Now solitude is not estimated by the number of people who live together, but by their retirement from bad passions; otherwise not even the Car-

thusians would be solitaries. Where such solitude is present there is indeed the closest companionship. He is happily solitary who is corrupted by no wicked company, who has in his heart no tumultuous passions striving with each other out of harmony with God. Such a man may be a monk in the courts of kings, in the halls of government, or in the marts of men. What sort of perversity is it then to hate a monk simply because he is a monk? Do you profess yourself to be a Christian, yet turn away from those who are most like Christ? You will say at once, I know, that many of them differ from this description. But we shall set the seal of our approval on no kind of life whatever if we hate the good members on account of the wicked ones. What is left then? What, but to love men, to make the best of them, to shut our eyes to their lighter failings, to endeavor to remedy their graver ones rather than to make them worse, and to venerate their Order itself and its rule? And if to their courteousness as ordinary men they add that of monks who devote themselves whole-heartedly and industriously to what belongs to true religion, easily would they regain their pristine popularity with the world, and easily would they silence the tongues of the slanderers. And the result would be that, not only would they be pleasing to God and acceptable to men, but they would live here in joy and happiness. For none live more quietly and sweetly than those who are really monks; none more miserably than those who are not so from the bottom of their hearts. To the former a monastery is a paradise, to the latter a drudgery. But it is in every man's power, in great measure, to change his drudgery into a paradise.

But I return to Haymo, who, striking the harp of David, will stir your angelical throng to spiritual dances, so that in hymns and canticles you will sing in your hearts to the Lord. Let no one be displeased with the simplicity of the diction, but let him embrace the piety of the sentiments. This I advise, because I suspect there are many like unto myself long ago, who loathe everything which lacks the seasoning and embellishment of rhetoric. But when I was a child in Christ I thought as a child; and would that I had entirely put away childish things. If this little offering of mine merit any favor in your eyes, I beg you occasionally to commend me a sinner to Christ in your prayers. The original of this work was owned by the venerable monastery of the Canons Regular commonly known as that of Marpach in Alsace, relics of that most inauspicious war of the peasants. May the Lord return them good for these evils. Farewell. Freiburg, February 28, 1533.[8]

There you have his recantation. In this one page he unsays what he said for years about his monastic brethren, and gives them the greatest panegyric within the memory of man. Every Protestant and every Catholic must here ask himself, Was this Erasmus' moment of greatest weakness or greatest strength? Was it then given him to see more

[8] Eras. Ep. (LB) 1463B *ad fin.*

clearly than at any other period of his life? On the answer which he will give to these two questions depends the amount of profit which the reader will derive from this lengthy study of the life and correspondence of Erasmus. We will not assume the office of special pleader, but from Erasmus' own words will let the reader decide for himself. We will only venture to warn him, and we also take the same warning to ourselves, that we ought not to be surprised if Erasmus will yet again deny his admissions, and seek to attenuate the inferences to be drawn from them. For this was his great defect, and no man is secure from the result of his failings until he is dead. And, perhaps, after all, his contrition was only attrition, and due rather to the constantly recurring difficulties which some of his past writings were causing him. For instance, in his letter to Abel Colster, he tells of advising a common friend who had written a theological work to be very careful how he expressed himself, and to refrain from controversy; but, if he insisted on entering the controversial arena, that he should keep these two things in mind: first, that he should fight from a safe vantage with these enemies who can neither be conquered nor placated; and, secondly, that he should not use Erasmus' writings in his arguments. This theological gladiator replied that he would fight with the arms of Erasmus as well as his own, which answer much displeased Erasmus, for, as he says:

> I have hitherto been waging a doubtful battle with a serpent of not seven but innumerable heads, and I am scarcely able to hold my ground on account of my *Praise of Folly* and other writings of mine which were allowed too loose a tone. And I fear that if he goes on he will again arouse against me the whole of that hatred. And what profit he expects to reap I cannot see. If he thinks that theologians and monks are to be corrected or crushed by him, he is entirely mistaken.[9]

Here we are in doubt whether Erasmus objects to the controversy on the grounds that there is no reason for it, or because he resents the efforts of this man to conquer where he himself had so signally failed. Perhaps he will tell us further on that it was the first reason which was actuating him. He was beginning to learn that humility is not incompatible with greatness, and that caution is an attribute of noble minds. This must have been apparent to him when he received Sadoleti's letter beseeching in all humility his kindly advice and friendly criticism of a work on the first Epistle of St. Paul, which he had just written:

> I beg of you, my dear Erasmus, on account of our mutual friendship for each other, to read my work with that attitude: that you will consider that I shall be under a greater obligation to you if you criticize those passages which you deem ought to be censured than if you praise those passages, if there be any, which ought to be praised. . . . I have always besought God's assistance, but I am liable to err. Therefore, my Erasmus, all my hope is in you; your judgment which you try to belittle I hold in the highest estimation, and rightly

[9] *Ibid.*, col. 1468c.

so. In that judgment is my refuge and my haven, as it will be also an honor to my labor. I rest therefore in you alone and in your regard for me, as also in your admirable virtue and learning.[10]

This was true humility on the part of a man who was as great in his own sphere as Erasmus was in his. This was an admirable diffidence: not the kind that springs from a lack of confidence in one's own ability, else he would never have undertaken the task, but a diffidence which comes from an absence of intellectual pride—and this, after all, is only another name for humility. True humility would at all times rather be right than be great, or brilliant, or imposing. This was, in our opinion, the one quality which had always been wanting in Erasmus. He was not careful enough in statement, and this is not to be wondered at when we reflect on his swiftness of composition and the tremendous output of his fertile brain. Let us illustrate what we mean by a concrete example. In the letter to Emsted about the true monk, which we have quoted on a previous page, Erasmus says: "What, I say, if, crucifying their flesh by fasting, by midnight watchings, and by toil, they supplement those things which Christ's sufferings lack, and, as it were, immolate themselves for the salvation of the people?"[11] Now we make no pretensions to theological learning, and have avoided the discussion of questions of divinity; but any man who remembers what the mission of Christ on earth was must recognize a heresy in this quotation. We know not if Erasmus was ever taken to task for it, and we give it simply as an example of his loose way of stating things. Sadoleti, we venture to say, would not have written this in the first place, but if he had he would have meekly retracted it without argument or defense. Yet we dare to say here in Erasmus' behalf that at no time during his whole life was he intentionally and wilfully heretical, and that if he fell into heresy occasionally, as in the present instance, it was due to his rhetoric more than to his doctrine. He always loved and hated in the superlative degree; so that, if we reduce to the positive terms his former inexcusable disparagement of the monks and his present fulsome eulogy of them, we shall free him from much unnecessary exaggeration.

To make up in some degree for his anxieties, his failing health, and his unpaid salary as an Imperial Councilor, gifts of considerable value began to flow in on him, among which may be mentioned one of two hundred florins from the state of Holland, one from the town council of Besançon possibly accompanying an invitation to make that town his future residence, for which favor we may remember he had petitioned them, and a princely gift from the King of Portugal, which came to him through the hands of his great admirer Damian à Goes, that king's secretary. In writing to the secretary in acknowledgment of the gift, he mentions that he had been much importuned to give his opinion on the divorce which King Henry was striving to obtain from Queen Katherine at the hands of the Pope. But Erasmus was too wary to burn his

[10] *Ibid.*, 1469E-F.

[11] "Quid, quod ieiuniis, vigiliis, laboribus crucifigentes carnem suam, quantum licet, supplent ea quæ desunt passionibus Christi, ac seipsos quodammodo immolant pro salute populi."

fingers with such a flagrant subject as that, and certainly spoke the truth when he said, "No mortal ever heard a syllable from me either in approval or disapproval of that matter."[12] To the above-mentioned gifts must be added the contents of a dispatch-box from Queen Maria of Hungary, regent of the Netherlands for the Emperor, enclosing an invitation for him to return to Brabant, three hundred florins for traveling expenses, and an offer of an annual salary. His joy was so great at the prospect that he bought horses for the journey; but, his infirmities increasing, he was obliged for the time to forego the trip, promising, however, that he would surely go in the following spring. Meanwhile he did not allow his name and memory to fade from the minds of his learned contemporaries, since we find letters from many of them, but filled mainly with the amenities of scholarly correspondence. Bembo replies to one from Erasmus, in which the latter had been urging him to employ the press of Froben in the printing of some of his works. Erasmus also mentions that he had a letter from Melancthon, who makes the rather astonishing statement that he is disgusted with his friends. As Melancthon had made a similar statement in the preface to his *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans,* we are obliged to accept the fact. We have every reason to feel sure that Erasmus' interest in Luther was by this time entirely dead, and that he would have been rejoiced to see Melancthon, for whom he had an affection of a sort, back again in the Catholic fold. He could measure Melancthon's extravagations by his own, and wonder whether or not these had been at all worth while. For himself they were causing nothing but regret, in view of the fact that the uncharitable and injudicious still refused to believe in his sincerity. So he writes to friends in Seville in a regretful strain:

> How many times have I refuted the manifest and impudent calumnies of those people! and yet, as if I had done nothing about such matters, to this very day they are taunting me with the old falsehoods, and that even by means of published books in which they say, "Erasmus makes Confession optional; he condemns all ceremonies; he derides devotion to the saints; he makes fun of ecclesiastical rites; he rejects Christian fasts; he disapproves of abstinence from meats; he dissolves the vow of sacerdotal celibacy, puts an end to the vows and observances of the monks, and censures human enactments." What more do they say? Why, that I have smoothed the path for Luther. Now those who have some little regard for decency, in order to calumniate me with greater security, say that they think that personally I am a good man, and that I did not write such things for the purpose of exciting these disturbances, and even praise me very much that I am now writing differently. Now this is the very essence of black malignity, this is pure malice itself. Let others endure such patronizing; I will not be so defended. This I have candidly confessed, and do still confess, that, if I had foreseen such an age as the present one would come to pass, either I would not have written many things which I have, or I would have written

[12] Eras. Ep. (LB) col. 1472A-D.

them otherwise, and I would not have done many things which I have done. They say that it is the part of a wise man to calculate what may happen. I admit it, but one cannot divine everything that may occur, and I acknowledge my folly and thoughtlessness in some ways.[18]

These are, we must confess, differences without distinction. All he wanted was to be let alone and have his mistakes forgotten, but, unfortunately for him, human nature was not so constituted, and he resented the kindly efforts of his friends to set him right before the world almost as vehemently as he resented the calumnies of his enemies.

[18] *Ibid.*, col. 1486c-D.

CHAPTER XXIV

SICKNESS; LUTHER ON ERASMUS; DEATH OF CLEMENT VII

Though constant sickness had not dimmed his mental keenness, it had begun to incapacitate him for continuing his labors with his former ardor. There were now long intervals of forced inactivity when his hand could not hold a pen and when he could do nothing but ponder. Through his open windows floated in the chanting of the monks from the neighboring Franciscan monastery, that Order which he had stigmatized so often, and which had returned his invectives with compound interest. He was having softened moods in which his hatreds seemed to him unreasonable, and his antagonisms unjustifiable. He writes:

> . . . I live here so close to the Franciscans that from my room I can hear them singing just as though I were in their chapel. We are very friendly together because there is no malice amongst them. They have with them a preacher, a good and modest man, who often cites Erasmus with honor in his sermons.[1]

The question "Had it all been worth while?" must have presented itself to him very often at this period; and, with death, the great mystery, to be solved in the very near future, he must have had serious doubts as to whether or not his judgments had always been wise at the critical moment. He was in frequent pain, and was learning, perhaps for the first time, how sublime a thing it is "to suffer and be strong." A long and painful life was bringing him some physical courage at last, and he was no coward when he penned the following lines to John Choler:

> . . . Would that I might have more joyful news to write you about my health; but this pain in my feet, or in my hands, or over my whole body, attacking as it does every limb, darts away to a new spot when it has sufficiently scourged the old haunt, the unbearable pain thereof lasting generally about four days; then, when the swelling appears, it becomes less painful, but, after the manner of generals, takes many fortresses and, leaving behind a garrison therein, proceeds to take another, there fighting with renewed fury, returning on the slightest provocation to the original spot of onset, which it makes worse than ever. It will not bear even the lightest touch, so that you might call it a thistle, which the Greek proverb warns you not to handle. I am beginning to fear that this little old body of mine, tortured by so much suffering and distress, may not long hold out. Freiburg, February 19, 1534.[2]

[1] Eras. Ep. (LB) col. 1284A.

[2] *Ibid.*, col. 1491A-B.

He seems to face it very manfully and is fully resolved not to capitulate to this enemy at least. So, throwing back his head once more, he faces his self-appointed work. But the acute articular rheumatism, of which he has given here almost a classical description, would not permit him to do very much during this incoming year of 1534, and we have no work issued by him bearing this date. Two of his hostile critics were dead, Alberto Pio, Prince of Carpi, and Stunica. The former had died while the last of his works against Erasmus was going through the press, as we have already stated, so that Erasmus was in the very unsatisfactory position of replying to a man who could no longer defend himself. Stunica, as we have also noted, when on his deathbed, had sent for his friend Sepulveda, like himself a Spaniard, and had entrusted to his care some animadversions on Erasmus, with instructions to send them to the latter, who was at liberty to make whatever use of them he thought proper. Sepulveda performed the request of his dying friend to the letter, and, after expressing his own high regard for Erasmus' attainments, drew his attention to some slips in geography that had escaped the latter's notice in the haste of composition, with the idea that Erasmus might feel gratified to have the opportunity of correcting such errors in forthcoming editions of his works. That Sepulveda did this with all becoming courtesy and respect we will show by quoting that part of his letter to Erasmus:

> . . . I take this occasion, out of my good will and regard for you, to caution you not to be forgetful when it is a question of discussing the localities of cities, but to review your Strabo, Mela, Pliny, and Ptolemy; because, during the last few days, while I was looking over your *Epistles of St. Jerome,* I came across certain notes of yours in which I had wished that you had been less careless. For in the epistle to Evagrius you write that Rhegium is a town in Greece, and that Constantinople is in Macedonia, although the latter town, which was first called Byzantium, is in that part of Thrace which is most remote from Macedonia, while Rhegium is in Brutia where Italy is separated from Sicily by a narrow strait. Now if you had had in mind Cicero's ancient epithet of Magna Graecia, you ought to have remembered that when he speaks of Greece simply he is not referring to that part of Italy, but to Attica and its neighboring territory. I remember also, but the passage has slipped my memory, that in another note you say that Nicopolis, so called from the victory of Augustus, was a city in Thrace, when it is in reality in Epirus near Actium, at which place Antony was overcome in a naval battle. But you were probably led astray by the fact that there was another town of the same name in Thrace. In your edition of Cicero's *De senectute* I note that you make Capua to be a town of Apulia, when it is the capital of Campania, and formerly, with the exception of Rome, the noblest town of Italy. It is due to the same want of attention that you set me down as a Portuguese in your *Ciceronianus,* when you knew I was from Corduba, as I informed you in that pamphlet which I spoke of above. So I

> thought, out of friendship and kindness, I ought to warn you of these matters, which are very trifling in themselves, and most easily avoidable by you when you are on your guard, but which allowed to pass indicate great negligence on your part. . . . I hope you will accept this in good spirit; because if I shall learn that you have done otherwise I shall not again distress you with my unpleasant attentions.[3]

But Erasmus, much chagrined at being found lax on questions of geography, and especially by a friend of Stunica, became abusive, styling Sepulveda "the most boastful of the Spaniards." He would not give him credit for his sincerity in the matter of transmitting the animadversions of Stunica, but said that Cardinal Inachus had compelled him to do so. So we see that Erasmus had lapsed from grace once more, and sought to salve his wounded pride by abuse. As a matter of fact, he was mostly self-taught in his youth, and evidently geography was not one of his strong points.

The state of affairs in Germany had now come to a frightful pass, and he did not know the day or the hour when the Anabaptists might arrive in Freiburg and put him to the test. So far their activities had been confined to Münster and the surrounding territory, where their peculiar tenets had caused frightful disorders. One of their leaders named Matthys went into a trance, during which he said he had been commanded by God to expel from the city all who refused to be converted to his doctrines. As a consequence, a large part of the population were driven out of their homes in the depth of winter, and numbers of the old and infirm, as well as mothers with infants in their arms, were consigned to perish in the snow, while the self-styled saints occupied their homes. Their particular tenet was to own all things in common, and this communistic principle they pushed to its logical conclusion by advocating free love and repudiating individual ownership of wives. They seem to have been a very early ebullition of the present day extreme socialistic or bolshevistic party. They believed with Luther that the end of the world was coming, and shaped their acts accordingly. Hence their idea of abolishing all social distinctions and all such devices of the devil as property and marriage. Before this mischievous sect was finally put down, thousands of lives had been lost and the greater part of Germany thrown into disorder. Luther suffered from them more than anyone else, for the Anabaptists cried out that there were four prophets, two true and two false ones, the true ones being David and John of Leyden, the false ones being the Pope and Luther. So, while the extreme Catholics were blaming Erasmus for laying the egg which Luther had hatched, the extremists on the other side were blaming Luther for all the savage and bloody proceedings of the Anabaptists. Luther in turn blamed Erasmus for the loss of respect which religion had sustained by his writings, and Erasmus blamed Amsdorf for inciting Luther to thus accuse him. Here is Luther's letter to Amsdorf, much abbreviated on account of its great length:

[3] *Ibid.*, col. 1761D-1762A.

I wonder at your opinion of Erasmus wherein you simply state that there is no foundation to his learning except the favor of men, and in which you attribute to him both ignorance and malice. Now if you could persuade the multitude to this belief you would, like a little David, overthrow this most boastful Goliath and destroy his entire following at one blow. . . . For myself, I attribute to him an extraordinary thoughtlessness and emptiness of speech; for to such an extent does he seem to treat sacred things slightingly, and to devote himself to little trifles and ridiculous levity with an eagerness not at all becoming to an old man and a theologian, especially in these most turbulent and engrossing times, that I am almost led to believe the report that I have heard from wise and prudent men that Erasmus is insane. Now, when I first wrote against his *Diatribe,* and was compelled to weigh his words, that is to *prove his spirit,* as St. John teaches, I was struck by his thoughtlessness, especially in a matter of such importance, and pricked him out of his snoring, as it were, in order to arouse this dull and lazy disputant, accusing him of being of the same opinions as Epicurus, Lucian, or the skeptics, in a word, just to see if he could not be sharpened up a little in his own cause. But I accomplished nothing except that I irritated a viper who at length in fury brought forth his *Viperaspides,* an offering worthy and most like such a parent. To the matter itself at issue he totally neglected to respond, so from that time on I have entirely despaired of his theology. . . .

He published amongst other things a Catechism recently, written on a satanic plan, by which he thinks to prepossess Christian boyhood and youth, and to imbue them with his poison so that they can never hereafter be saved from it, just as he himself in Rome and Italy sucked in his Lamias and Megaeras so that there is no curing remedy for him. . . . Our new catechizer aims at this one thing, that he may render his pupils doubtful and the dogmas of faith to be held in suspicion, while from the very first, omitting anything solid for them to build on, he brings before them the heresies and scandalous opinions only by which the Church has been vexed from the earliest times; and he almost insists that there has never been anything sure in the Christian religion. . . .

And so in this serpent-like way he creeps in and tempts their simple minds. Why have there been so many sects and errors in the one (as it is believed) true religion? Why in the Symbol of the Apostles is the Father called God, the Son not God but Lord, and the Spirit neither God nor Lord but Holy, and such like questions? Who, I ask, frets with such questions these simple minds which he has undertaken to teach unless the Devil himself? . . . Moreover, what is his *Method* [*of True Theology*] with its deviosities, save a derision of Christ and of everything done by Him? Who will derive anything from such a *Method* except a distaste for—nay, a hatred of—learning so confused, perplexed, and perhaps fabulous, a religion? . . .

There is an infinity of such things in Erasmus, or, rather, that is

his whole theology, as many before me have remarked and still observe more and more daily. Nor does he ever cease from daily adding to and publishing more widely his annotations, for his judgment is hasty and his perdition sleeps not.

And this is a singular thing about the piety of Erasmus: that, in his epistle to his *De philosophia christiana* [the *Paraclesis*] which he has added to his *New Testament* and is circulating publicly in all the churches, when he proposes the question, why Christ, so great a master, descended from Heaven . . . he replies that He did so that thereby He might show Himself more perfect and absolute than the other saints. . . . This wretched disturber of all things has thus assailed the Lord of Glory: Christ has lost his glory as the Redeemer, and is merely more holy than others. . . .

That was the first passage that alienated my mind from Erasmus. Immediately I began to set him down as simply a Democritus or an Epicurus, and a skilful derider of Christ, who shows his hatred of Christ to his fellow-Epicureans, but thus in figurative and insidious phrasing. . . .

Very rightly did the Prince of Carpi, whoever he was, reprehend him as a favorer of the Arians by pointing out in his preface to his *St. Hilary,* where he says, "We dare to call the Holy Ghost God, which the ancients have not dared to do."

Now, as to what he said of our free will, I repeat that the tyranny of Erasmus with his double-meaning words is not to be borne, but he must be judged simply by his own utterances. If he speaks like Arius let him be considered an Arian, if he speaks like Lucian let him be set down as a follower of Lucian, if he speaks as a gentile let him be held to be a gentile, unless he gets sense and ceases to defend such expressions. . . .

But our ambiguous king sits securely on his throne of ambiguity, and with a double grinding pounds as in a mortar us stupid Christians. . . .

But to your letter now, dear Amsdorf; this is enough to say on that matter. Yet I wish to show why I do not think that Erasmus should be replied to. . . . For my *Seruum arbitrium* is sufficient example to show you how difficult it is to meet Erasmus, that Proteus, on account of his flexible talk and his slipperiness on which he wonderfully relies. For he will not stay in one spot, and he is skilful in avoiding the blows, like an irritated hornet. . . .

So it seems wise to me not to answer him, but I will leave my testimony about Erasmus for his own sake, so that he may at length be freed from that trouble he is always complaining of, namely, that he is held to be a Lutheran. For, as Christ lives, they do him a great injustice, and I must defend him against his enemies who accuse him of being a Lutheran, when according to my belief and certain testimony he is not a Lutheran, but only Erasmus.

I of a certainty desire that everything Erasmian shall be banished from our schools; for, even if he were not most pernicious, he is good for nothing, he treats nothing, he teaches nothing. It is not

> proper for Christian youth to become accustomed to his Erasmian way of speaking. They will learn to speak and think of nothing seriously or gravely, but only to laugh at everybody after the manner of a jackdaw or a magpie.[4]

This letter of Luther's is most important. If Lee, Bedda, Stunica, the Prince of Carpi, and so many others needed justification for having objected to Erasmus' loose method of writing, Luther has here furnished them all they need. The reader may draw his own conclusions. Erasmus made little or no defense. What he did say follows:

> . . . Of Luther I will say nothing at present, except that I wonder why, at the prompting of Amsdorf, a man, as I understand, who is ignorant and silly, he should so rage at me, and should bring forward against me things which, even if I did not reply to him, he might know from my writings were most inane. I did not lack arrows myself, nor did I lack friends who urged me to reply to him most vigorously, but I preferred to merit the approval of the learned and the good. His letter has not injured my reputation; how much profit he may derive from it I know not.[5]

The waning year of 1534 was signalized by the death of Pope Clement VII, who died on September 25th, after a stormy reign of almost eleven years. Almost all his political policies had turned out to be blunders, and his pontificate was marked by the defeat and imprisonment of his ally Francis I, followed later by the sack of Rome, in which he himself was taken prisoner by the conquering Emperor. From a religious point of view, his reign had been disastrous, which is always the case during war, as Erasmus had so often pointed out. But he must be given credit for at least good intentions, for the same conditions confronted him that that had confronted Julius II and Leo X, in the inordinate desire of the Emperor, on the one hand, and the French king, on the other, to totally dismember and take possession of the greater part of Italy. The later Italian historians are now inclined to give these Popes full credit for their efforts in this regard, and Clement is now more favorably considered than formerly. He was a Medicean prince, and that was his misfortune; because at a time when Florence was in the very forefront of the turmoil not only was he Pope, but also a prince of one of these very territories which was struggling against the loss of its liberty in the maelstrom of contending parties. Most of the contemporary historians belonged to one or the other of these hostile parties; and it is not to be wondered at that there was some belittlement of merit and exaggeration of blame extended to this Pontiff of which he was not always deserving. We must remember the calibre of the men with whom he had to cope, for that is most important. In the Emperor Charles V, Francis I, King of France, and Henry VIII of England, three monarchs who had not the slightest personal or spiritual fear of him or any other Pope, and each of whom was per-

[4] De Wette, *Luthers Briefe,* Vol. IV, pp. 508-19.
[5] Eras. Ep. (LB) col. 1494D-E.

meated with a supreme egoism, Clement faced a trio of the most consummate and adroit politicians that the world has ever known; and, if in his desire to safeguard the interests of the Papacy, or even of the Italian states, they sometimes beat him at the game of strategy, it indicates just as readily that he had exceptional opponents as that he was a weak and ineffectual strategist. But, whatever his failings as a temporal ruler were, he must be given immortal credit for having resisted the divorce of Henry VIII and Katherine of Aragon at a time when he could have made immense capital out of it for his nearest and dearest temporal interests. That he did not do so gives him some claims to greatness; for by this slight exercise of his spiritual power he could at once have mortified the pride of his inveterate enemy the Emperor, whose aunt Katherine was, and he could also have riveted to himself the aid and assistance of Henry of England. But not even for this great advantage would he wrest the power of the Church to work injustice on Katherine and vengeance on the Emperor who had shut him up in the Castle of San Angelo and had sacked the Eternal City. That is a spectacle of moral grandeur of which we must not lose sight when estimating the character of Clement VII. We are to lift our eyes from the wretched state of affairs in which he was only one, and possibly a most unwilling, participant, where he had to deal with men whose methods were ruthless and barbarous, and fix them on him as the spiritual head of the Church, where he would not bow the neck nor prostitute the power he held for any worldly advantage. And, when we are told that Leo X and Adrian VI and Clement VII did not properly handle the Reformation, it is probable that the three men who are really responsible for this were not the three Popes, but the three monarchs whose selfish and internecine warfare rendered these Popes powerless to act at the critical moment. Not Luther, not Erasmus, not the Elector Frederick, nor any of those whose names are associated with that movement, were responsible for the Reformation, except as instruments; but the real and responsible individuals were Charles, Francis, and Henry. And strangest anomaly of all, though they were promoting it, they were not interested in it, except as it might be made a political issue. With three such men holding in their hands the destiny of Europe, what could Clement or any Pope do? So we are inclined to think that history has dealt unkindly with Clement VII; and, instead of adding our note to the general dispraise, we are disposed to give him a greater meed of praise than he has yet received, and at least to regard him as a "brave man struggling in the storms of Fate."

He was succeeded by Paul III, a Pontiff who determined to learn by the mistakes of his predecessors and to allow the claims of Italian independence to rest for the present. Though he saw that Sicily and the territories subject to Naples were in the hands of the Emperor, and that Francis I was still maintaining his claims to the Duchy of Milan as against those of the Emperor, he determined that the best policy for himself to pursue was that of absolute neutrality.

CHAPTER XXV

CONTINUED ILLNESS: BASLE AGAIN: CARDINALATE DECLINED; FINAL LETTERS

The year 1535 brought no amelioration to the physical condition of Erasmus. If we may rely on the testimony of George Sabinus, Melancthon's son-in-law, who had seen Erasmus at Freiburg, the now rapidly aging writer was declining visibly; and Sabinus adds that not only his eyes and the faculties of his body were deteriorating, but that the powers of his mind were failing.[1] So far the present writer has seen no change in his mental characteristics as evinced in his correspondence, except an increased querulousness and impatience, which is not to be wondered at when we remember his bodily sufferings and the sort of criticism to which he was subjected on so many sides. It is easy to find spots on the sun, and it is the easiest thing in the world to criticize; and certainly Peter Cursius, a Roman professor, had not nearly so justifiable grounds to censure Erasmus for his carelessness as Sepulveda had. Erasmus had been unfortunate in the choice of an adjective when speaking of the Italians in one of his adages, *"Myconius Caluus,"* wherein he explained his meaning by adducing the phrase, "as if one were to call a Scythian learned, or an Italian bellicose," using for the latter adjective the Latin *bellax*. There is a fine distinction to be drawn, as Erasmus points out, between adjectives of this kind and the nouns from which they are derived; and he claimed that the term, as he had used it, signified not praise but blame, and cast no aspersion of military cowardice, the imputing of which to the Italian people was the thing furthest from his mind. It was one of those vexatious matters which are only made worse by attempts at explanation; but Cursius thought fit to publish a pamphlet against Erasmus entitled *Defensio Italiæ aduersus Erasmum,* and had it dedicated to the new Pontiff, Paul III. Now Cursius was certainly in the wrong in this affair, and Erasmus had for once a good right to complain of such tactics, which he proceeded to do with all his old-time tartness:

> . . . You ought to be spending your time to better advantage than in attacking Erasmus, now a useless old man worn out with trouble, who is nothing else but an ass not entirely inert among the monkeys. However, those who insult me seem to be dogs in the manger, who would drive the cattle from the fodder by their mangy barking, but who cannot eat it themselves. Now, if I shall find out, which I scarcely expect, that you are publishing the least little item

[1] See Melchior Adam's *Life of Sabinus,* in *Vitæ Germanorum,* Vol. I, p. 227. Frankfurt, 1615.

against me, you will feel, if I am not mistaken, that, though Erasmus is now seventy years old, he is neither toothless, nor has he lost his ability to scratch you. If, however, you are inclined to be fair, as I trust, you will deserve my thanks for warning me of the cowardice of those who are selling these pamphlets. . . . For the rest, we ought to take care that good literature does not suffer in the estimation of the unlettered on account of inane squabbles; for, unless we cease to wrangle on frivolous matters, not only will we be forced apart by being treated to rotten eggs at the hands of the promiscuous multitude, but shall be chained up in order to curb our mad fury. May the Great Ruler of all bring it about that with submissive hearts we may receive His grace, by whose protection we may be able to scatter the nefarious enemies of the Church. Farewell, and exhort those distinguished men, Genesius Sepulveda, and Augustine Eugubinus, to promote decaying learning rather than to become snarlers. Freiburg, January 9, 1535.[2]

His letters now become few and far between, and are mostly about himself, his troubles, and his enemies. He was very lonesome now, and tells a friend that Viandulus is dead, as also Martin David, both of whom were his hosts on occasion at Brussels. Peter Gilles of Antwerp is dead, as well as Francis Delfus; and the beloved Botzheim, to whom he had sent a complete catalogue of his works up to that time, with the manner in which he would desire to have them classified and printed, is also gone. In the same letter he complains:

. . . Luther publishes nothing now in which he does not lash Erasmus, "the papist and adversary of Christ." The man is simply furious, and has conceived a homicidal hatred against me. . . . But if I wish to live I must totally abstain from writing, yes, from all kinds of study, although to me it will not seem to be living without the company of the studious, amid these perpetual tortures of mine. But the Lord lives, in whose hands we all are.[3]

Although hitherto he had always spoken of Freiburg in the highest terms, he now begins to fear that the air of that town was aggravating his ailments:

. . . The climate of this place has always seemed to disagree with my frail body, and even about the house itself, although it is elegant, I have my doubts. However, I am not very much concerned about the matter now, for I have lost all hope of ever being better, in this life anyway. Since boyhood I was of a delicate constitution, and of the slenderest frame (according to the doctors), so that inclement weather easily affected me; but the vigor of later years partly offset and partly overcame this inconvenience. Now, after not only my labors, but especially after my deadly struggles with the gravel, succeeded by these dire tormentings of every joint of my worn-out body, I am nothing but skin and bone; so that it is

[2] Eras. Ep. (LB) col. 1498A-C. [3] *Ibid.*, col. 1501D-E.

> natural that the frailer my poor body daily becomes, the more readily I am affected by the changes of temperature. So it is evident that I am becoming so ethereal that I am better or worse with every condition of the atmosphere; but ills are the more easily borne when they are not to be lasting.[4]

He was suffering from that advanced form of rheumatism which is known as arthritis and is due to the deposit in the joints of waste material which the organs are no longer able to eliminate. The pain is intense in advanced cases and is utterly incapacitating. This became so bad before he finally left Freiburg that he was confined to his bed for a lengthened period. And yet, as Beatus Rhenanus tells us,[5] as soon as the pain would in the least subside he would eagerly resume his writing. He spent his last winter at Freiburg in this remittent condition, but improved somewhat in the following spring, so that he was able to go to Basle, in a sort of litter, to superintend the printing of his *Ecclesiastes*. How sore his joints were, even then after he had partly recovered, we learn from an anecdote preserved for us by Melchior Adam in his *Life of Oporinus*. This man, who was a printer whose real name was Herbst, had sent him a present of some wine, and when they afterwards met they naturally shook hands.

> . . . Oporinus shook the hand of Erasmus quite vigorously, whereupon the latter . . . cried out loudly that he was hurting him. Oporinus was struck dumb, not knowing whether Erasmus was joking or not, which perceiving, Erasmus addressed him kindly, and ordering wine to be served up bade him be cheery. So Oporinus sat down with others of his friends of whom there were a great number assembled on account of the arrival of the great writer, and, while the cup went round the circle once or twice, he gradually came to himself and addressed Erasmus in a learned and grave oration which was worthy even of the eminent guest. They parted cherishing the spark of a mutual love which served to enkindle the flame of a true benevolence and kind regard for each other.[6]

We have often drawn attention to this sort of fascination which Erasmus exercised over his friends in social converse; and this quality, which never left him entirely, was the secret of a good deal of his personal popularity. A man might just have arisen from a perusal of some of the writings of this great literary light feeling that with much of them he could not agree, but let him spend five minutes in the company of this suave, urbane, and brilliant man, and all his doubts were at once dispelled.

He had written to the new Pontiff to felicitate him on his accession to the Chair of Peter, and the Pope had replied very graciously, commenting favorably on the attitude of Erasmus towards the Church, and inviting him to take up his pen once more in her defense:

[4] *Ibid.*, col. 1511F-1512A.
[5] See preface to Origen, which work Erasmus began but Rhenanus had to finish.
[6] *Life of Oporinus*, in *Vitæ Germanorum*, Vol. I, p. 248.

Beloved son, health and the Apostolic benediction. Your letter which our beloved Louis Ber, Canon at Basle, brought to us was most acceptable. For although it would have been pleasing to us for the sole reason that it came from you, whose celebrated name we have held in our affection, and by whose learning we have set great store, yet it was all the more so on account of the richness of its style and the gravity of its sentiments, its elegance, and its evident piety, all of which circumstances have made it most acceptable to us. For although you have manifested your good will in congratulating us, your kindness in praising us, and your prudence in exhorting us, you have still more endeared yourself to us by the piety which appears in your wishes for the tranquillity of the Holy Church, and your evident desire and prompt offer to serve her interests. We are well aware how much your excellent learning, to which is joined an equal eloquence, can avail in eradicating a leaning towards these current errors from the minds of many. This is the reason that, having already decided to do what you afterwards piously advised us to do, namely, that we should guard a certain moderation, apply ourselves entirely to the cause of the Faith, and devote ourselves to the reëstablishing of the tranquillity of the Church, we are filled with joy that a man of your known judgment and affection would give us counsels about what we ought to do, and that at the same time your advice cannot but contribute to our glory. . . . We shall be more properly and willingly grateful to you for this than for the congratulation and praise that you make personal to ourselves, although for these also we are in your debt. We share your eager wishes as we ought, separating them, however, from any merit of our own, which is naught, referring them all to the kindness of God alone; and, while grateful to Him for His goodness and desirous of accomplishing His will, we only hope that we may be equal to the burden laid upon us. For, although this our office has always been accompanied with anxiety and solicitude, but now especially in these days of ours carries with it toil and distress, yet must not the service of God be declined on that account, nor the office be less esteemed by reason of the difficulties and trials that are to be endured. We shall therefore go forward with alacrity to meet such difficulties, not relying on our own strength, but placing our hope in God that He will at length have compassion on His own, and will lead into the harbor the barque of Peter which we now command, which has been for so long the prey of the winds and waves, and will command them to be stilled. This, my son, is why we the more exhort you also, to whom God has granted such talents and learning, to aid us in this pious task for which you are so essentially well fitted, and to sustain with us by speech and writings the Catholic Faith both until the Council which, with the assistance of God, we intend to hold, and also during its continuance; and, by this last, and crowning, as it were, act of piety, you would worthily conclude a life passed in virtue, and your so numerous writings. Thus would you confound your calumniators and

summon to your side apologists; and although the reward that awaits you at God's hands will content you, yet you will not find ourselves either unmindful or ingrate. You will ascertain more fully our intentions in your behalf from the report of Louis Ber himself, whom for his own virtues and your commendations we have noted with pleasure. Given at Rome at St. Peter's, under the Fisherman's ring, May 31, in the year of Our Lord, 1535, and of our pontificate, the first.[7]

And the Pope was as good as his word. There seems to be no doubt of his intention to make Erasmus a Cardinal, for we have it from too many different sources to allow us to question it. But to be a Prince of the Church in those days necessitated a large income, and to provide Erasmus with this the Pope set himself cordially to work. The usual way, and in fact the only way, in which this could be accomplished, was to endow the intended recipient of cardinalitial honors with a number of benefices or ecclesiastical *livings,* the revenue from which would suffice for him to maintain the state and character of a Prince of the Church. So the Pope gave him in a few weeks the first benefice along the lines proposed, accompanied by a Brief couched in the following terms:

Beloved son: health and the Apostolic benediction. Being mindful of your probity and integrity and of your eminence in the various kinds of learning, as well as of your merits towards the Apostolic See in fighting with all your ability against the deserters of the Faith, we have gratefully conferred on you the provostship of [the Canons of] Deventer in the diocese of Utrecht, left vacant by the death of John Winkel of happy memory, which office is said to return a revenue of six hundred florins, so that you may already experience some reward for your virtue. Moreover, that the benefice may not be diminished by the delay and expense of settlement, we shall send to you our Apostolic letter immediately concerning these arrangements, being prepared to favor your virtue and erudition as also your judgment and intentions at every opportunity. Given at Rome at St. Mark's, under the Fisherman's ring, August 1, 1535.[8]

Some writers have intimated that the Pope had no intention of promoting Erasmus to the dignity of the Cardinalate, but that was not his own interpretation of the friendly offer of Paul III, for he expressly states this in his very amiable letter to Bartholomew Latomus:

I received a few days ago from Pope Paul III the most gracious and most honorable letter possible. . . . I had written to his Holiness by the advice of Louis Ber the famous theologian. Before the Pope had unsealed my letter he spoke of me in very honorable terms; and, since he had taken the resolution to promote to the Cardinalate some able men whom he might send to the Council soon

[7] Eras. Ep. (LB) col. 1500E-1501E. [8] Eras. Ep. (EE) p. 262.

> to be held, the name of Erasmus was mentioned. Some made objections on the ground of my health being too frail to perform the duties, and my revenues too scant, for they say there is a rule which excludes from the Cardinalate those who have less than three thousand ducats of annual income. Now, they have resolved to give me some benefices in order that I may have sufficient income to be able to be a Cardinal. But that would be like giving silk attire to a cat. At Rome I have a friend who is busying himself about the matter, although I have often written him that I want neither benefice nor pension, being the creature of a day and expecting to die at any moment; sometimes, indeed, I long for it, so great are my sufferings.[9]

Moreover, he told his intimate friend Goclen, from whom he had no secrets, that six Cardinals, together with the ambassador of Portugal, were at work to get him the hat, but that he had written to them that he would accept neither benefices nor pensions. Bembo and Sadoleti, both of them elevated to the cardinalitial dignity at this time, intimated to him that he was in line for this promotion, and since each of them had excellent means of knowing the facts in the case, we need have no doubt that such was the Pope's intention. Why Erasmus so resolutely refused to accept any office, benefice, pension, or the dignity of the Cardinal's hat from the hand of the Pope caused the greatest astonishment to the world at large; and it is no wonder that some of them who were not well disposed to him refused to credit it. But we believe we have the solution of the mystery in the ancient difficulty of his illegitimate birth, which acted now as it had acted before in preventing him from accepting Church honors and emoluments. For as near death as he was, he had not reached the point where he felt able to despise money, since we shall yet hear him saying to Gilbert Cousin, on hearing of the death of some of his patrons:

> My old friends leave me; new ones must be prepared to take their places. In Poland Peter Tomicius, Bishop of Cracow, is dead, and Zasius at Freiburg. In England either death has taken them off, or fear has lessened their number; and those who give me pensions excuse themselves. However, all unhoped for and by what design I know not, Thomas Cromwell, secretary to the king, and a man of immense influence, has sent me a gift of twenty angels, the Archbishop of Canterbury [Cranmer] eighteen, and the Bishop of Lincoln fifteen, but not one of them has written to me. Bedill is the only one who has dared to write, with the exception of Eustathius the imperial ambassador, who has written more freely perhaps than was advisable.[10]

This was written many months after his refusal of the benefices, and only four months before his death, so that we have to look elsewhere for the real reason for such refusals. In the abstract sense he never cared for money; as a means of ensuring his personal comfort and

[9] Eras. Ep. (LB) col. 1508D, 1509F-1510C.

[10] *Ibid.*, col. 1519B-C.

securing him in the ease and repose necessary for the production of his works, it had always been very potent with him. So he would not have been regretting the loss of Mountjoy's and Warham's pension when greater ones were being offered to him by the Pope, were it not for some ulterior reason. Now for the fact. By turning back to the chapter in which occurs the dispensation given him by Pope Leo X as to his abandoning the Augustinian habit and permitting him to acquire benefices, we note that a limit was set on the amount of revenue he might lawfully take from such *livings,* the sum being set down not to exceed one thousand gold ducats in pontifical money. But, as it would require three thousand at least of these same ducats to properly sustain and maintain the position of a Cardinal, another dispensation at the hands of his successor Paul III would be necessary. To obtain this would require the digging up, out of the grave where he had buried it eighteen years before, the skeleton which he had taken such pains to keep hidden from the gaze of men. Again his birth would be a subject for mirth and laughter among the irreverent and thoughtless of the Roman Curia, and he would again imagine that he heard the accursed epithet of "bastard" hurled at him. No, it was much easier to tell his friends that he was done with all honors, benefices, or pensions than to face this dreadful ordeal again. Had the honor come to him when he was younger and with health unimpaired, we make no doubt that he would have swallowed his pride and for the third time have endured the shame, that he might as recompense have triumphed over his enemies. But at this late day even a Cardinal's hat did not seem worth the effort and humiliation necessary to gain it. So he told his friends at Rome to intimate kindly and courteously to the Pope that his age and bodily infirmities precluded him from considering the position to which his Holiness desired to elevate him, which gave occasion to one flippant personage in the Eternal City to remark that, for a witty man, Erasmus had not displayed much wit in this matter. And surely he was now beyond the period when worldly honors could have much appealed to him. Like the Venerable Bede in this one thing, nothing now interested him but his beloved writing; and he meant it sincerely when he exclaimed to Damian à Goes:

> Would that the Lord would take me to His rest and away from this furious world, so far am I from desiring the long life you are invoking for me. If by my writings I have helped anyone towards piety of life, I am glad of it; but I care nothing for fame, and would that I were not burdened with it![11]

The pleasure of living was gone for him, and he was schooling himself to face the inevitable lot of every man. His sufferings were so keen at times that he longed to have it all over with. Like Job he could truly say, "I have done with hope, I shall now live no longer; spare me, for my days are nothing."[12] He had pondered on the meaning of the Psalms, and had realized the transitoriness of human passions. He had begun to think more kindly of some of his former opponents,

[11] *Ibid.,* col. 1506B-C. [12] Job vii, 16.

which is probably the best proof we have that he was becoming more spiritualized and less anxious about mere worldly reputation. In spite of constant suffering, he had managed to finish his *Ecclesiastes* and had forced himself to make the exertion necessary to betake himself to Basle to see it through the press. There is an interesting history connected with this work, which is worth noting, as his dedication shows:

> . . . I have found out by experience, friend Christopher,[13] ornament of the bishops of this age, that it was no vain saying of the ancient oracles that trouble followed a promise. Many years ago I promised some sort of a work on preaching, but, to tell the truth, I was not really in earnest about it. When afterwards I was seriously asked to make good this not seriously meant promise, but had no time to put into effect what was being demanded of me, I began to jot down here and there on pieces of paper notes for future use, if perchance I might feel the will and capacity to undertake the matter. But I did not exercise much care or order [in the selection of my material], but seized it as opportunity offered it. The demand becoming more urgent, I began to gather my scraps together, all topsy-turvy as they were, some of them even being torn and stained with dirt. When these were examined, more and more I shrank from the task, just as I had always done previously, from some unexplainable feeling of my mind. I saw that the subject was as varied as it was vast, and would make an immense volume if it were to be rightly treated, and would also attract considerable hostility in the present condition of the times. When at last there was a continuous demand for it, and that I might not seem entirely false to my promise, I put pen to paper, but with reluctance. I kept rejecting what I had written, for nothing seemed to please me. Again and again I laid it down, only to take it up again after some interval if my mind should warm to it; and I bound myself to the task with chains as tenacious as those with which Vergil tells us Aristæus bound Proteus. Success, however, crowned his efforts, but mine did not succeed. Meanwhile I entertained the hope that, by my delaying, someone would arise who would assume the undertaking, especially among such a number of fortunate geniuses as this age has produced, who are so eager to publish new works. Since no one appeared to undertake it, and day by day I was being more vigorously urged, both personally and by letter, even to the extent of incurring abuse in the matter, I approached the distasteful business, raw and undigested as the material was, so that I might at least show my desire to fulfill my promise provided that my ability was equal to this desire. Nor was I able to work at it continuously; for at times my enfeebled health, and at times my other intervening labors, compelled me to lay aside the task I had assumed, so that it was only at long intervals that I could resume my work on it. That is why the learned reader may perhaps observe certain gaps, certain

[13] This was Christopher Stadius, Bishop of Augsburg, to whom he had dedicated the work.

incomplete sentences, certain repetitions, certain things said in an unsuitable place. Someone may say, "Why did you not correct later what displeased you?" Not to use deceit, it irked me to go over such a vast work, when what I had already done of it had been accomplished in spite of increasing infirmities. No one can easily imagine how pitifully my mind longs to retire from such toils, and to rest tranquilly during what remains to me of life, little as it must be, and to be able to speak alone with Him who long ago exclaimed, and is still exclaiming, "Come to me all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you." Hence it is that in such a turbulent, not to say insane, age, amid so many anxieties which these times publicly, and my age and infirm health privately, bring on me, I find nothing in which my mind more willingly reposes than in this mystical colloquy. Therefore, I trust all the more that the just reader will take in good part what I here offer him, and take it as it is.[14]

Just as this was the last preface which Erasmus wrote, so it was the most sincere. It was the Omega of his life's work, and we may consider his task finished. Thirty-three years before, he had written his *Enchiridion,* a work primarily intended for the laity; now at the end of his days he had written his *Ecclesiastes,* a work especially composed for the clergy. In his *Enchiridion* he had first, in a doubting and uncertain way, assailed monks and monasticism, and from his knowledge of the inner workings of the monastic institution was able to point out defects which his personal animosity magnified. That there were glaring defects no one denies; that they were not immediately remedied on being pointed out was due to many causes, principal of which was the wars of those days, which engrossed the attention of the Pope as well as that of almost every European monarch then ruling, to the neglect of spiritual matters. In a word, while the purely temporal was in the saddle, the purely spiritual was pushed into the background. Hence Erasmus made the mistake of taking for approbation what was really inattention, and thus perpetrated his *Praise of Folly,* and later his *Colloquies.* How bitterly he now regarded these works is evident from his numerous protestations to his various friends that had he been able to forecast the future he would never have written them. So that from this time forward, whenever he felt called upon to speak of monasticism, he spoke of it with due respect, and when he had to speak of monks he took the utmost care to differentiate between the many good and the few black sheep. In fact, towards the last, he practically ceased to bring up the unfortunate subject in any way. In his *Ecclesiastes* he seems to have regained his true mental equilibrium, so that he was ready to make allowance for the weaknesses of human nature. Speaking generally of priests in this work, he demands for them the respect of the laity, even though some happen to be bad; for he says:

The people must remember their duty to those who have the care of souls, and must not regard the character of Conrad or Walter,

[14] See Dedication, *ab initio.*

but only their office, and the One whose place they are taking. Whatever of honor we pay to a man on account of Christ is paid to Christ and not to the man.[15]

And he seems to realize that he had railed too much and too caustically; for, advising the clergy on their duty of warning the faithful against their failings, he says: "It is according to the gentleness of the Gospel that the preacher should advise rather than reproach." [16]

And then he instances Paul's advice to Timothy to rebuke and entreat, but, mindful of the gentleness of the Gospel, to mix oil with wine. He bids the preacher to address his audience thus:

> We are all men, and there is no one who does not fall occasionally, although some are more given to vice than others. I a sinner admonish you who are sinners. Together we have erred, together we will amend our lives, so that we who now feel a mutual sorrow may by repentance experience a common joy.[17]

This is so different from his former practice of excoriating offending ecclesiastics that one is struck with astonishment at his change of heart. But he goes on: "To speak to the people of the crimes of rulers, or magistrates, or bishops with bitterness is to excite tumult. The faults of such as these are often put up with as the lesser evil." [18]

This is wonderful when we remember the tone of his *Praise of Folly*. But note what follows:

> How many are there, not only men, but even women, who, forsaking their native country, parents, friends, relatives, companions, and worldly prospects, even all the delights of life, devote themselves as it were to perpetual imprisonment by joining the austere Order of the Brigittines or the Carthusians, either for the purpose of gaining the remission of their sins, or to lay up for themselves in heaven a greater treasure of glory? There is one institute of monks who, instead of haircloth, bruise their naked flesh with an iron breastplate, go about with legs and feet bare, make their bed on the cold earth, drink water instead of wine, and eat dry bread instead of delicate food. Others there are who, of their own accord, scourge their bodies with whips. Again there are some who, clad only in a thin single garment, feet and head bare, lie on the hard ground with no covering on them, but sleep in the same garment they wore by day, drinking neither wine nor beer, and touching no food except bread, cabbage, and raw apples. To them baked fruit is a Paschal delicacy. They touch no money, and have no dwelling, nor monastery, nor superiors from whom to ask for anything. They fast on all the days indicated by the Church, not as we fast during the Lent, but during the entire day until noon of the following day they taste neither food nor drink. Nor do they ever abate in the least from the austerity of their lives, not even when they are dwelling in the coldest regions. When so many men

[15] See *Ecclesiastes*, Lib. I, p. 131. Lyons, 1543.
[16] *Ibid.*, Lib. II, p. 275.
[17] *Ibid.*, Lib. II, p. 281.
[18] *Idem.*

like these willingly take upon themselves such austerities in order to deserve well of Christ, why are there so few who strive eagerly for the office of the preacher, than which there is nothing more pleasing to Christ, or more efficacious in blotting out our sins and preparing for ourselves a crown of glory? [19]

It is something new for Erasmus to speak in praise of the Brigittines and Carthusians, and the excessive rigor of the hermits described so well above he used to set down as superstition, and their fasting as abomination. He cannot allow them to pass, however, without some measure of criticism, strenuously objecting as he does to their assumption that they are the only ones who are dead to the world, and claiming that such assumption borders on arrogance. Dying to the world is a very hard task, we may readily suppose, even in a monastery, and he may be right in his objection. But throughout this entire work he seems to speak from the heart. There is no longer visible the disposition to air his superb learning; and his quotations are more from the Bible than from the classics. He was weary in body and mind, and the desire for peace, the great, final, and perpetual peace, had taken possession of him. One of the last sentences of his *Ecclesiastes* is this: "Nobody is at peace with himself in whose heart is present a tumult of thoughts which are mutually accusing and defending themselves; nobody is at peace with God who is at discord with his neighbor." [20]

These were the solemn thoughts of a man at the extreme verge of life, who had said his say, and not always wisely, as he now realized. He felt and envisaged his defects at last, saw his own innermost soul, and implored his friends to call him great no longer. It was the sunset of his life which gave him the mystical lore of which the poet speaks, and which he incorporated in his *Ecclesiastes*. After all he was very human. His contests in the theological arena were over and done with, and he had lost his taste for those gladiatorial conflicts which, he now realized, were not always maintained for the sheer love of truth so much as for the love of fame. Consequently, a letter such as the following, which was written to him by Ambrose de Gumppenburg, must have given him more of pain than of pleasure:

Moreover, I again admonish you, Erasmus, best of friends, nay, I beg and entreat you, to devote your attention to extinguishing those new sects with their perverse teachings. Do not recede and fall away from the doctrines of the Church, which have been hitherto piously observed and accepted by our fathers. Strive to preserve the Catholic Church now lying wounded; stand forth once more with your advice and efforts against the blows of those who by underhand methods are threatening her strongholds in order to dismember her. Believe me, for I am speaking sincerely, you will be doing a work which you will never regret, and you will some time admit that I have given you the advice of a friend. Therefore, whatever you publish in future, dedicate it to the Supreme Pontiff, and see that I receive two copies to show his Holiness in your name;

[19] *Ibid.*, Lib. I, pp. 113-4.

[20] *Ibid.*, Lib. IV, p. 740.

> and, if you cannot dispatch these conveniently by another's messenger, send one of your own. . . . But, whatever you shall do or write, remember to avoid ambiguity, lest your writings convey what you did not intend; and, whatever you think on any subject, boldly lay it bare. Now I beg again and again that you will accept this exhortation of mine as coming from a friend.[21]

And this friend was an apostolic protonotary of the Roman Curia, a circumstance which will serve to show us how Erasmus was regarded at Rome during his last years.

He had left Basle to go to Freiburg in April, 1529, at a time when the two parties were struggling for the mastery of the city, with the Evangelicals getting the upper hand. When he returned in August, 1535, after an absence of six years, he found only one party there, that of the Evangelicals. The Catholic faith had been completely eradicated as to all outward semblance, and there was no longer any Mass, Holy Eucharist, Confession, nor even a priest to dispense the Sacraments. The only attraction for him consequently at Basle was the press of Froben; and he expressly states as much in his letter to the Bishop of Cracow written a few days after his arrival there, in which he fears that his coming to a non-Catholic city like Basle might now be misinterpreted. But he tells the Bishop that it is not his intention to stay at Basle permanently unless absolutely obliged to do so by stress of circumstances, since he had a handsome and well-furnished house at Freiburg. Later events show us the uncertainty of his mind on this point. Basle was tenable only as a temporary expedient; Freiburg had become distasteful to him for several reasons, chief of which were the absence of a suitable press there and the high prices charged for the necessities of life. It is true that he had with him at the University there Glareanus, Ber, and others of his old friends; but, as we have already pointed out, things had become uncomfortable for him in that town. So he decided at all events not to return to Freiburg and gave Ber instructions to sell his house there; and when that was accomplished he sent his former secretary Gilbert Cousin to dispose of the furniture. His choice now lay between Besançon and Brabant. Besançon attracted him on account of its location in the heart of Burgundy, where the fine Burgundian wines were to be had. He had become so accustomed to these wines that, when he was deprived of them by any accident, he felt his health sensibly suffer. Moreover, some of the city officials, notably Leonard de Gruères, held him in such esteem that they used to send him presents of his favorite wine. On the other hand, there was his own Brabant, where the Regent Maria, the Emperor's sister, was ruling, who had invited him personally to return and grace her court, having to that end increased the pension which he was drawing as Imperial Councilor, an invitation not to be lightly refused. It is true that he could have his Burgundian sent to him from Besançon to Brabant, but he had found by experience that the rascally carters had made a practice of drinking the greater part of the wine en route and

[21] Eras. Ep. (EE) p. 238.

then filling up the casks with water. So he was uncertain how to decide; and the epithet of *"Cunctator"* would have fitted him as admirably as it ever fitted Fabius. So he stayed where he was for the present, awaiting some event which might make the decision for him.

It is related and denied that Bucer presented Calvin to Erasmus during this visit to Basle, and that Erasmus was alleged to have said, "I beheld a great pestilence arising in the Church against the Church," and that he meant Calvin thereby. We will not enter into the merits of this question further than to say that the dates do not agree, and that we might as soon expect Luther to visit him as Bucer, who had been writing against Erasmus in a very acrid manner. Moreover, there was nothing in common between Erasmus and Calvin, and we find ourselves in agreement with Jortin, who thinks it most improbable.

Sad things were happening in England; and of the few friends left him there, two were this year taken away from him by a bloody and unmerited death. We allude here to the executions of Bishop John Fisher and Sir Thomas More. So many of his former English friends, acquaintances, and patrons—Warham, Mountjoy, Latimer, Colet, Grocyn, Foxe, Wolsey, and others—were now dead that his interest in England had visibly waned; but the sudden taking off of Fisher and More snapped the last tie that had bound him to that generous and hospitable land. In his loneliness he cries out in the preface of his *Ecclesiastes:*

> . . . Only the other day I lost William Warham, Archbishop of Canterbury, and more recently Lord Mountjoy; now the Bishop of Rochester is gone, and Thomas More, the supreme judge of that kingdom, whose heart was whiter than any snow and the like of whose genius England never had and never will have again.[22]

He had long foreseen and foretold that serious happenings were at hand in England, for even as far back as 1533 he had written Viglius Zuichemus to that effect:

> . . . I am sorry that English affairs point to grave trouble. . . . The Pope orders that the King of England shall live with his Queen in the marriage bond until Rome has decided in the matter. But who is there who does not know that this contest will never end while that couple are alive? It is now eight years since the affair began, and the King has a heavy conscience, not without cause, since two hundred divines have proved to him from the Scriptures and by argument that his marriage [to Katherine] ought not to have been entered into, either by human or divine law. Now, if the Pope shall pronounce it no marriage, he will in the first place offend the Emperor [Katherine's nephew], and in the second place it will be a condemnation of the Holy See itself for unlawfully granting a dispensation.[23]

[22] *Ed. cit.*, p. 7.

[23] The one empowering Henry to marry his brother's widow. (Eras. Ep. (LB) col. 1757A-B.)

He said in his letter to Cousin that, since his old friends were dying off, new ones must be found to take their places, thus indicating that he was unaware how near death was to himself. This often happens to those who have been long ailing, and he little dreamed that in three months almost to the very day on which he penned this sentence he would join the number of those who had already passed over to the great majority. He must have been a source of great anxiety to his servants at this time, for sickness seems to have accentuated his eccentricities, and more especially his jealousies and suspicions. This Gilbert Cousin, one of his former secretaries, had been given a benefice, as we have said, but Erasmus could not rejoice with him as it inconvenienced himself, and he made no secret of his displeasure. Hear this list of complaints against the young and learned scholars who thought it an honor to act as copyists for him, and whom he used to employ on his confidential service at home and abroad. The letter itself is written to Goclen:

> . . . Balthazar, your Austrian pupil, says that he is going to dispatch his own servant to Louvain; I have entrusted to him some unsealed letters for you and Jodocus Sasboud, so that, if you will, you may see to it that his are forwarded to him. Let it not escape you that Cannius is not a bit more sincere than that crazy Hagius. Whatever poison this last-mentioned fellow imbibed from Alardus he has poured into the mind of Cannius, as an asp would to a viper. He did the same thing to that buffoon Polyphemus. I wonder whence he came, or where he was going when he journeyed hither. Even Quirinus Talesius has been infected by the conversation of Hagius, and he in return has poured his venom into the breast of the other. Hagius has kept back nothing, nor could he if he tried. I suspect too that he has alienated Charles Utenhove at Ghent, for that person writes not a word now, though he was wont to write me frequently. Delphus no longer corresponds, and I think his mind is turned against me. Neither does Morillonus, for I have not heard a word from him since he went to Spain.[24]

He seems to have forgotten that he had pilloried both Cannius and the so-called Polyphemus in that one of his *Colloquies* to which Oecolampadius had taken exception,[25] and cannot understand their resentment. Quirinus Talesius was a youth of high intellectual endowments, so much so that Erasmus chose him to represent his interests on a trip to England during which this young man had to interview Warham, More, Fisher, and even to appear at King Henry's levee. Charles Utenhove was a young Brabanter to whom, when a student at Pavia, Erasmus wrote that unsympathetic account of the death at the stake of Berquin, mentioned on a previous page. Francis Delphus of Antwerp was another young patrician, with whom he lodged on occasion when in that city. Guido Morillonus was a secretary to the Emperor. It is not probable that all these young men were in a conspiracy to annoy Erasmus, and, no doubt, it is the querulousness or suspicion of

[24] *Ibid.*, col. 1513E-F.

[25] See p. 315.

old age which is at the bottom of all this complaining. But we will continue this letter:

> . . . I feel a little better, so perhaps I shall spend the winter here and seek the neighboring Burgundy in the spring, please God. What Theobald told you about my pension sent me from England, set it down as an idle tale. I enclose a letter to Sasboud, which please see forwarded to him. This youth Lambert whom you have sent me pleases me. I had already procured another one from Antwerp. Until Gilbert, who has now become a canon, leaves me, I shall have three. I have made no contract with either of these new assistants. If I should need the one you recommend, I will notify you, and I am much indebted to you in the matter. There is at Freiburg a pretended friend of mine by whose machinations I have not been permitted to have either a man servant or a woman servant that was good for anything. I will give you his name at some other time that you may beware of him, for perhaps, after the book fair, I may send my own special messenger. Aleander has again published a furious book against me, this time under Dolet's name, in which he revenges himself on More, whom he knew to be in prison.[26] This madman has suborned Cursius at Rome to write against me. There is something appearing at Milan, but I know not what. The Romans are striving to load me with money willy-nilly, so that presently I may be made a Cardinal. This has been seriously considered, as the Pontiff is wonderfully prepossessed in my favor, and six Cardinals, besides the Portuguese ambassador, are working sedulously to that end. But I have written to them that I will receive neither benefices nor pensions. I am sending the Pope's Brief to you. Farewell.[27]

How much he missed Cousin, who had been his copyist for several years, is evident in another letter which he wrote on May seventeenth of this his last year on earth; in it he shows that, besides bringing him nearer to his cherished Burgundy wine, his residence at Besançon would locate him closer to his former secretary, whose *living* was only a short distance from that town. This letter is written to Francis Bonvalet:

> . . . I thank you for your gift of wine, which was certainly delicious. But, since it is the mark of an ingenuous mind that to him to whom you owe much you are willing to owe more, I wish that to your former favors towards me you would add one more, and that the most acceptable of all. Old age is overtaking me day by day, and my illness is increasing in severity. I very much need the help of Gilbert Cousin, who knows all my affairs after living with me for so many years. But I hear that he is involved there in a vexatious lawsuit, from which, with your assistance, he can easily extricate himself. He will accept any conditions, provided

[26] We have already shown that Aleander had nothing to do with it, nor with the pamphlet of Cursius.

[27] Eras. Ep. (LB) col. 1513F-1514B.

they are in the least just. Peter Richardotus, the magistrate's assistant, will lend his aid if you instruct him, and if you will make the necessary defense before the senate of Dole. Believe me, there is no danger here from the Sects. Not one says a disagreeable word to me, and I do not wish to have anybody in my house who might be infected with the new doctrines. Now, if God grants me any strength so that I may be able to reach Besançon, then Gilbert will be extremely necessary to me, for my other copyist knows no French. If you will show yourself herein to be the friend you always were, bound as I am to you, you will make me still more so, etc.[28]

But before he could receive an answer to this letter he became too helpless to go either to Brabant or Besançon, being confined absolutely to his bed, facts that we learn from his letter to Tillemann Giese, who had been Bishop of Culm, but was now Bishop of Emmeland. It was dated on the sixth day of June, 1536:

S. P. Your letter full of learning and genius made me greatly regret that I cannot respond to your wishes. Your Eberhardt will bring you back an account of my condition, confined as I am almost entirely to bed, and in such poor health that I am compelled to refrain completely from every sort of literary work, without which life would be unbearable even were I in the best of health. Hence, kindest of friends, if you receive no acknowledgment, at least you will pardon it to a dying man. Farewell. Your friend Erasmus of Rotterdam, with my own feeble hand.[29]

We are quoting generously from these last letters of his in order to show what thoughts were in his mind during his final days on earth. We have another which does not lack interest, written to a certain fellow Imperial Councilor about a month before his death:

S. P. All good men are publicly indebted to you, most illustrious sir, who in your official position grasp the web of affairs with firm mind. For the chief characteristics of a sincere judge are that he shall restrain those who are evil, and protect the good from the injustice of the wicked. But on my own account I am indebted to you in that some time ago in the case of Goclen you brought it about that he got what was justly his, and that, with the same feeling towards him, you endeavored to ward off injustice from him. Such brawls do these Roman harpies create for us that neither among the French, nor the Scotch, nor even among ourselves, does a benefice fall out without its being accompanied by a litigation of several years. I would much desire that the English were at peace with the Pope. They have long ago seen to it, however, that the Roman Curia shall excite no litigations in their country. Although

[28] *Ibid.*, col. 1520B-C.

[29] This letter did not appear in the Leyden edition of his works, but may be found in Salomon Hess' *Erasmus von Roterdam nach seinem Leben und Schriften*, Vol. II, p. 606.

the case of Goclen had its weak spot, yet the man himself, who by reason of his learning adorns and honors the dominions of the Emperor, is worthy of enjoying the favor of the judge. Now, since his cause is most just, how unseemly it is that such a man should be summoned from the public service to mingle in these turmoils, with the greatest detriment to studies, and not without loss of that respect whereby the Council has always greatly availed with the Brabanters. I hope that Goclen, by the assistance of his good friends, has already been restored to his study and his usual tranquillity; but, if this has not yet been accomplished, again and again I beg of you that you will continue to show him the good will that you have hitherto displayed in his behalf. By this service you will oblige all who foster liberal studies or cherish the authority of our Imperial Council. I shall say nothing about myself, since for a long time I have been in your debt. Farewell. Basle, May 29, 1536.[80]

It would appear that Goclen had been named to a *living* to which there was another claimant, and that a lawsuit had been the result. The next letter, which was the last that Erasmus ever wrote, will explain this matter more fully. It was written to Goclen himself, who was the only intimate confidant that Erasmus now had on earth, and for whom he had been trying to obtain the friendly offices of men of position to help in the affair. It was written on the twenty-eighth of June, 1536, fourteen days before he died, and shows the mark of the bodily distress under which he was now laboring:

S. P. You tell me to write to the Chancellor for you, just as if I lived at Mechlin. Here hardly in four months does there turn up such a one that I might safely entrust a letter to him, or, indeed, any person whatsoever. If your letter had reached me during the book-fair, I might have been able to reply by the same means. But now, when will this letter reach you? I hope that your case will have issued from its trial favorably; yet I have written [the Chancellor] anyway. When your letter was handed to me I was so ill that at no time in my life was I ever more so, and so much so that I was not even able to read for several days. That Antwerpian prebend never looked inviting to me, and even after you had won it I had an idea that something would happen. Now, if at present it looks favorable, I would nevertheless advise that you get rid of the parish for any decent offer. If you hold it *in absentia,* it will return you very little emolument; if you decide to live there, you will be living in a pestilential part of the city, eating in common, and sitting in chapter the whole of each day, pretending and quarreling. If you are in urgent need, you know that my money is yours.

Then without noticing the abruptness of his change of topic, he swings off on to his own troubles, and begins to give free rein to his suspicions:

[80] Eras. Ep. (LB) col. 1520D-1521A.

I suspect that the author of these troubles of mine is the same man who suborned the Scaligers, the Dolets, and the Merulas against me. The fellow, who is as vindictive as a Jew, is not satisfied with attacking me, but he must also attack my friends.[31] In Dolet's furious dialogue it is More whom he is assailing. He has some one at Liège who instigates him secretly and puts him up to all sorts of malicious tricks.

Then he makes another swift digression, according as new ideas throng his tired mind:

A certain Spaniard has by letter commended me to the heroine of Nassau[32] who is coming hither. You request me to write to her, but I know not where she is to be found, for you intimated that she was about to leave there. If you had really known how things were with me here, you would have answered her in my behalf that I had been compelled to leave Freiburg on account of my health, and with the object in view that, after seeing my *Ecclesiastes* through the press, I was going to betake myself to Besançon in order not to be outside the Emperor's dominions, but that my health becoming worse I was obliged to pass the winter here. Although I am here amongst friends that are most sincere, and such as I had not at Freiburg, yet on account of the dissensions about doctrines I would prefer to end my days elsewhere. Would that Brabant were nearer! I know not whether it was profitable to myself to commend your cause to the Chancellor, on account of Panormitanus,[33] whom it is not expedient to alienate. I suppose that all of you, yourself, Rescius, Andreas, Lipsius, and Schetus, have received the letters which I sent you during the previous book-fair. Why was it necessary for Rescius to interpret the *Greek Institutions* translated from the Latin? It would have been more fitting for him to have translated Demosthenes, or Lucian, if the latter had anything chaste in him, or tragedies filled with serious thought, or authors of similar character, whence the elegance of the Greek language is learned. But he looks entirely to the money end, and is seriously imperiling that College. Farewell. Basle, June 28, 1536.[34]

[31] He is again alluding to Aleander.
[32] Probably Juliana of Stolberg, the mother of Prince William of Orange.
[33] John Carondelet, Archbishop of Palermo, and President of the Privy Council of the Netherlands.
[34] Eras. Ep. (LB) col. 1521A-1522B.

CHAPTER XXVI

DEATH OF ERASMUS: OPINIONS OF CONTEMPORARIES

After getting the *Ecclesiastes* off his hands, he had begun work on an edition of Origen; but death took him off before it was finished. So his close friend Beatus Rhenanus published it with a preface by himself, in which he gives a short abridgment of his departed friend's life and a few details about his death. These latter are scant indeed, but perhaps we may be able to reconstruct the scene in some measure. On his arrival at Basle from Freiburg, the Frobens had installed him in apartments close to their printing establishment, and this solely for Erasmus' convenience. Almost all his young amanuenses had left him for various reasons already mentioned, and their places were now filled by young men from the Froben office. One of his own, however, continued to give assistance, namely, Morellus Grineus, whom Sammarthanus [1] speaks of as having spent a good part of his youth in Erasmus' service. There was possibly one other copyist whom he alluded to as not being able to speak French. One or two aged women for the work of the kitchen probably completed the household, but undoubtedly Jerome Froben and Episcopius, with his wife Justina, were present to attend him in his dying moments. We shall give the account of his death in the words of Rhenanus, to whom we owe so much for the information he has given us about various periods of Erasmus' life:

> Erasmus had returned from Freiburg to Basle in the previous year so that he might be present while his *Ecclesiastes, or Method of Preaching,* was passing through the press of Froben, and might also finish it there, for a part of the conclusion was still lacking; also for the purpose of improving by change of air the bad health from which he had begun to suffer at Freiburg. He had not left as if he were never to return, for he had lived there most agreeably under Ferdinand, King of the Romans, of Hungary, and of Bohemia, who by personal letter had earnestly recommended to the authorities of that town Erasmus' importance; and there for seven years he had not only been beloved by all the members of the University, but was also highly esteemed and regarded by the town council and the citizens. After he had been repeatedly invited to her court of Brabant by Maria the illustrious Queen of Hungary, who had even sent him money for traveling expenses, wishing to fulfill the promise he had more than once made her of returning to Lower Germany, he arranged to have all his belongings transferred from Freiburg to Basle and thence down the Rhine to Bra-

[1] Elog. I, iii, p. 78.

bant when navigation should be favorable. After he had done this and the good season of the year was fast approaching, the arthritis, with which he had been afflicted at Freiburg, so confined him to his bed until nearly the following autumn that he rarely left his chamber, and only once was he outside of his room. And yet in such torturing of his limbs he never ceased to write whenever he felt the least respite, as is proved by his little commentary *On the Purity of the Christian Church,* and this present revision of Origen. But his powers diminishing little by little, for he had suffered almost a month with dysentery, he at length perceived that his end was near; and so, surrounded as ever by those visible and eminent testimonies to his Christian patience and his devout mind by which he witnessed that he had fixed his hope on Christ, crying out constantly, "Mercy, O Jesus, Lord deliver me, Lord make an end, Lord have mercy on me," and in the German language, "Lieber Godt," that is, "Dear God," on the twelfth of July near midnight, he died.[2] No other words did he utter, although having full use of his reason to the very last breath. There should be an entire absence in a Christian of all impatience in paying the debt due to nature, since the death of the pious is nothing but a passage to a better life, and those who die are not dead, but only precede us to where we desire to go, as . . . Tertullian puts it. A few days before he died, when Boniface Amerbach, Jerome Froben, and Nicholas Episcopius, who were his more intimate friends, were paying him a kindly visit, he reminded them, on their entering his bedchamber, of the three friends of Job, asking them where were their torn garments and the ashes that they were to sprinkle on their heads. Several months ago he was wont to predict that he would die this year, and he made the same prophecy even two or three days before his death. How general was the regret for him was indicated by the crowds that came to view the remains. He was carried on the shoulders of the students to the Cathedral and there honorably buried near the steps that lead to the choir, as it is called, on the left side of the edifice where there was a little chapel dedicated to the Blessed Virgin. In the funeral procession were seen not only the Governor, but most of the Senators, and not a single one of the professors and students was absent. He was quite liberal during his life towards students in want and others who were worthy of help, as often as any came his way. The last wishes of this man did not differ from his usual goodness, for he made a will confirmed by the authority of Pope Clement, of the Emperor Charles, and of the Magistracy of Basle, in which he charged his heir, the most illustrious jurisconsul Boniface Amerbach, with the duty of distributing his goods to those

[2] It would seem that in his dying moments Erasmus fell into the language of his childhood and said in Dutch, "Lieve God," which sounded to the bystanders like their familiar "Lieber Gott," for there is no reason why in such a moment he should fall into the German tongue, which he has told us that he could not speak. Of course we have to remember that by Rhenanus and his contemporaries the present Holland was all considered Lower Germany, and we know that the Dutch language is of Germanic origin.

who were poor or infirm, to maidens of marriageable age that their virtue might be protected, to young students of good promise, and to anyone of this sort whomsoever he should find worthy of help; and he added to him two executors, Jerome Froben and Nicholas Episcopius. What could be more saintly than such a will, or more Christian? Others dedicate their property to the building and adorning of basilicas; Erasmus preferred to bestow on the living temples of God what remained of his goods after his death. However, he left legacies to some of his closer friends; and he enjoined on his heir to rest content with certain things not equalling the fourth part of the legal requirement which the lawyers of to-day call the Trebelianican requirement, to whom surely the desire of such a man, friend, and preceptor, antedates any law. He lived to his seventieth year, which the royal prophet David has set down as the general term of man's life, or certainly did not much exceed it; for of the year of his birth in Holland we are not sure, but of the day, which was the twenty-eighth of October, sacred to the apostles Simon and Jude, we are positive. At Deventer he made his first entrance into learning by imbibing the rudiments of both languages under Alexander Hegius of Westphalia, who had contracted a friendship with Rudolph Agricola, recently returned from Italy, by whom he was being instructed in Greek, for he was the first who brought into Germany any skill in that literature. As a boy he had the comedies of Terence at his fingers' ends, for he had a most tenacious memory and a penetrating mind. Except for these rudimentary teachings, he can be said to have been self-taught; for that he went to Italy later on in his life in the company of the sons of the royal physician, and also of the Archbishop of St. Andrew's in Scotland, at that time in Siena, in the capacity of preceptor, he did for the sake of visiting that most noble country, and not to attend the lectures of professors. For he did not attend the lectures of any of the professors then teaching publicly at Bologna; but satisfied with the friendship of Paul Bombace, who afterwards perished at Rome in the time of [Pope] Leo,[3] he pursued his studies at home, collecting at the same time adages for his work on that subject, which he gave to Aldus shortly afterwards to be published. This necessitated his going to Venice, where he made friends of those most learned men, Marcus Musurus and Scipio Carteromachus, both of whom he frequently consulted whenever he encountered a difficult passage, and whose learning and kindness he was wont to speak of to his friends. With Jerome Aleander of Motta, a man most skilled in the three languages, and who is at present Archbishop of Brindisi, he was long most intimate as a fellow-lodger in the home of Aldus, and he will bear me out in this. Besides these he had as friends Ambrose Nolanus the physician and Baptista Egnatius. Afterwards he was very highly regarded at Rome by Cardinals Raphael Riario and John de' Medici, who shortly succeeded Pope Julius II, having assumed the title of

[3] He probably meant Pope Clement.

Leo X. He taught at Louvain, at Cambridge in England, and even privately at Paris, where as a young man he studied theology. He received his Doctor's cap at the University of Turin, while he was on his way to Italy. He had patrons and Maecenases, such as Henry of Bergen, Bishop of Cambrai, William Mountjoy, and the most generous of them all, William Warham, Archbishop of Canterbury, and Primate of all England, of whom he often makes mention in his works. As friends he had John Colet, Grocyn, Latimer, Linacre, and Thomas More, in England; Peter Gilles, at Antwerp; and Conrad Goclen, at Louvain. He had a fairly well-knit frame, but was of a most frail constitution, and was easily upset by a change of the slightest things, as for instance, his wine, his food, and the state of the weather. He spent his time in literature with untiring energy; and the number of books written by him, whose titles there is no need to recount since he himself made a catalogue of them for John Botzheim in years gone by, will amply testify. At Basle he lived with John Froben for some time, and later dwelt apart in a residence of his own. After he had returned from Freiburg, he died in the home of Jerome the son of John. From Schletstadt, 1536.[4]

Four years afterwards Rhenanus wrote a longer sketch of his life, and addressed it to the Emperor. Since we have drawn from it already in the composition of the present work, we shall only copy what he further says of the personal appearance of Erasmus. He repeats that he was of a fairly well-knit frame, but of a most fragile constitution, and then goes on to say that he

. . . suffered in his later years from frequent attacks of gravel, not to speak of his catarrh, that constant and common enemy of all studious men.[5] He was of a fair complexion, with light hair in his younger days, bluish-gray eyes, pleasant countenance, high-pitched voice, his phrases beautifully expressed, his dress impressive and dignified as became an Imperial Councilor, a theologian, and a priest. He was most constant in clinging to his friendships, never changing his attitude towards them once he had inscribed them on his list of friends. He had a most happy memory, having memorized when a boy the whole of Terence and Horace. He was liberal to the poor, whom he was accustomed, when he was returning from Mass and on other occasions, frequently to relieve by means of his servant. Especially to young students of good promise and talent, whenever they came to him in want, he was bountifully gracious and munificent.[6]

Much used formerly to be made of the fact that Rhenanus never mentioned the presence of a Catholic priest at the deathbed of Erasmus,

[4] Eras. Ep. II.

[5] Rhenanus could sympathize with his friend here, for he was a chronic sufferer from the same troubles.

[6] Eras. Ep. III.

from which it was inferred that none was present. Hence originated that saying of his enemies that he died "sine lux et sine crux." Rhenanus nowhere intimates that he himself was with Erasmus at his death, and it is probable that the account he gave of that scene was constructed from conversations with Jerome Froben and Episcopius. From researches of Mgr. de Ram published in 1842 we now know that a Catholic priest was present who was no other than his secretary Lambert Coomans, and in whose arms Erasmus lay dying while repeating the words, *"O Mater Dei, memento mei."* This young Belgian had been secretary to Cardinal van Enkevoirt, in whose retinue he went to Rome, where he remained until the death of the Cardinal in 1534. Returning to his native Belgium by way of the Rhine, he stopped to pay his respects to his compatriot Erasmus at Freiburg, as a result of which visit he remained with him as his secretary until the death of Erasmus two years later.[7] Hence there is no need for doubt that Erasmus died in full communion with the Catholic Church, and fortified in his last moments with her consoling rites.

He seems to have made several wills, but the one he left at his death is the one which shows what his sentiments were at the last of his days, and as this is the one which for us possesses most interest we give it here:

> In the name of the Holy Trinity. I, Desiderius Erasmus, relying on the documentary authority of the Emperor, the Supreme Pontiff, and the Magistracy of the illustrious city of Basle, again specify my last wishes by this writing from my own hand, which I desire to have confirmed and ratified in every way, declaring null and void anything which I may have otherwise devised. Firstly, in the certain knowledge that I have no legitimate heir, I constitute that pre-eminent man Boniface Amerbach the heir of my property, and as executors Jerome Froben and Nicholas Episcopius. I have long since sold my library to John à Lasco of Poland, according to the terms of a contract on this point already made between us: however, the books are not to be delivered to him except on the payment to my heir of two hundred florins. If he shall fail in this contract, or if he die before me, then shall my heir be free to dispose of my books as he will. To Louis Ber I bequeath my gold watch; to Beatus Rhenanus a gold spoon together with a gold fork; to Peter Vetere one hundred and fifty crowns in gold, and the same sum to Philip Montanus. I leave to my servant Lambert, if he shall be with me at my demise, two hundred florins in gold, unless I give him that sum previously. I bequeath to John Brischius a silver bottle, to Paul Voltz one hundred florins in gold, and to Sigismund Telenius one hundred and fifty ducats. To John Erasmius Froben I leave two rings, of which one has no stone, and the other has a jewel which the French call a turquoise. To Jerome Froben I leave all my wearing apparel and household goods, whether

[7] See *Bulletin de l'Academie Royale des Sciences et Belles-lettres de Bruxelles*, 1842, 1ère série, Tome IX. 2, p. 439. The facts were preserved for us by L. van Gorkom, *Beschryvinge der stad en vryheyd van Turnhout*. Malines, 1790.

they be of wool, of linen, or of wood; and in addition the cup which bears the coat-of-arms of the Cardinal of Mainz. To his wife I leave the ring which has the figure of a woman looking backwards. To Nicholas Episcopius I leave a goblet with cover which has verses inscribed on its foot; and to his wife Justina I bequeath two rings, one of which has a diamond, and the other a small turquoise. To Everard Goclen I give a silver cup which has engraved on its top the image of Fortune. If any of these legatees shall die in the meantime, what was devised to them shall remain at the disposal of my heir. Besides these items which I have designated for him by this present writing, my heir shall receive whatever is left of the cups, rings, or similar articles, and in addition the medals, insignia, and Portuguese crosses which bear engraved on them the heads of the King of Poland and of Severinus Boner, and all such things of a similar nature. I leave to him also all the doubloons and larger coins. The money which I have on deposit with Everard Goclen is to be left with him to expend in Brabant according as I have directed. If there be any remaining in the hands of Erasmus Schet, let it be gotten from him, and also any other that may be over and above, and let my heir, according to his best judgment and with the advice of my executors, distribute it for the benefit of the poor and sick who are advanced in years, for maidens of a marriageable age, for young men of good promise, and generally for all those whom he shall deem worthy of assistance. This testament, that it may be of fuller weight, I have written with my own hand and signed with my own seal by means of my signet ring, Terminus.

At Basle, . . . on the 12th day of February, 1536.[8]

At a time when he lived in fear of death at the hands of Eppendorff, he placed his money in the safe-keeping of various friends, fearing that it might revert to his brethren at Steyn.[9] This was a very necessary precaution, for as we have previously shown, on account of his illegitimate birth, he could make no legal will, and it is very noticeable that before making this last will he had taken the precaution to obtain the necessary permission from the representatives of both the Emperor and the Pope, together with the approval of the Magistracy of Basle, where the bulk of his property was. If he had died without taking these precautionary measures, his real estate, should he have any, would have reverted to the Emperor, and his personal property to the Pope. He had not lived all his life in fear of this very thing happening without having secured himself to the utmost of his ability. Hence the disposition of his property was never questioned, and the provisions of his will were carried out to the letter. He is said to have left at his death seven thousand ducats, a large sum in those days. To the same end in case of danger from Eppendorff, he had prepared for that contingency by selling his library in 1525 to John à Lasco of Poland, with the proviso, however, that he should have the use of it during his life. The epitaph which was engraved beneath the bust over his tomb in the

[8] Scriverius, *Vita Erasmi*, p. 63.

[9] See p. 375.

Cathedral of Basle is said to be the work of Boniface Amerbach, who, together with the two executors, Jerome Froben and Nicholas Episcopius, erected his tomb.

Innumerable were the verses made in honor of the dead writer, all tending to show the esteem in which as a scholar he was held by scholars. Nicholas Bourbon represents Germany claiming him on the one hand and France appropriating him as her own on the other, with the Fates deciding that he shall belong to neither nation, but to the world, as the support and the mainstay of literature. This was written even before his death. Paul Jovius pictures Germany beholding Erasmus and saying that she had never produced any greater man. Holland, being then part of the German Empire, and the Dutch being of Germanic stock, lent color to Jovius' statement. John Gigas styles him the ornament of the entire world, and William de Lisle exclaims that, since Erasmus is dead, it is a pious and religious act to die. His old secretary, Gilbert Cousin, wrote that the world had never seen his equal, and never would. Peter Lindemberg indulges in a pardonable hyperbole when he apostrophizes Erasmus thus, "You are neither a god nor yet a man, Erasmus, having the characters of both." Then he calls on the Muse to solve the difficulty, who says, "He is truly a man in body, but in mind a god." Boissard says, "Who has not known thee knows naught of the Muses, for thou holdest thy seat on Helicon's highest peak"; which is somewhat redolent of Milton's famous verse, "Not to know me argues yourself unknown, the lowest of your throng."[10] Theodore Beza had a marked admiration for Erasmus, as evidenced by his couplet to be placed beneath a portrait of the great writer to the effect that if the picture showed only the bust we are not to wonder, since the whole world was not large enough to hold him. Occasionally one of them contains a criticism, like the following by Janus Vitalis, "If your mind, Erasmus, was a little more slippery and confused than was proper, your genius was surely grand." Another runs thus, "If you wish to combine the praises of Erasmus in a few words, say that he was the sun and salt of his age." LeClerc cites many similar ones of the most flattering kind, but it is noticeable that practically all of them praise and extol him for his wit, his eloquence, and his learning; while none, whether Protestant or Catholic, praises him for anything he might have done for the advancement of religion. This demands due reflection. Let us see how Luther regarded this man who has been styled one of the heroes of the Reformation, premising that we have modernized the English somewhat for sake of clarity:

> The cogitations of Erasmus Roterodamus are of most eminent danger, and are great temptations; for he thinks that God deals unjustly with the good and godly when things go wrong with them, because if God were just and righteous and dealt according to equity and justice here on earth, and gave to people as they deserved, then he thinks that it would not go ill with the good and godly, nor well with the ungodly and the wicked. This is directly the opinion and

[10] *Paradise Lost,* Bk. IV, l. 830.

meaning of a disciple of Epicurus and an ungodly creature, etc.[11]

Another passage is still more caustic:

> The picture of Erasmus Roterodamus being brought before Luther, he said, "Erasmus (as his picture showeth) is a crafty and a subtle man; he derideth both God and true religion; he useth finical words, as *the loving Lord Christ, the worthy saving Word, the Holy Sacraments,* etc., but in truth, he holdeth them for very cold things. He is possessed with a scoffing spirit and courage, his words are smooth and nimble, as in his *Praise of Folly* and his *Julius*[12] are to be seen. In teaching he is very chilling, nothing worth; he can talk, but his words are made, not grown. When he preacheth, it soundeth like a patched kettle, it is altogether cold doings. . . . He did mock and scoff at Popedom a while since, but now he slippeth his neck out of the halter. I truly advise all those who earnestly do affect the honor of Christ and the Gospel that they would be enemies to Erasmus Roterodamus, for he is a devaster of religion. Do but read only his dialogue *De Peregrinatione,* where you will see how he derideth and flouteth the whole religion, and at last concludeth out of single abominations, that he rejecteth religion, although in logic you cannot draw conclusions from individual cases. For it followeth not that this John is a knave, therefore all Johns are knaves; or this learned man is a wicked villain, therefore they are all villains. But Erasmus concludeth thus:—Some religions are ungodly, therefore all religions are ungodly. Here we have great need of logic, it is a necessary art; but we have no need at all of such sophistical deceits and knaveries as Erasmus Roterodamus produceth, and others sometimes have in schools, *Nullus et nemo mordent se in sacco.*"

After thus expressing his opinion of Erasmus' logic, Luther proceeds to dissect his methods:

> Erasmus is no Graecus but a Graeculus; he imitateth others and flouteth them; he dealeth slackly and lazily with Christ and our Savior, insomuch that although Christ had been only a human creature, yet had He been worthy of greater honor than Erasmus attributeth to Him; for indeed He well deserved the same at our hands who did all goodness for us, and no evil, and shed His innocent blood to redeem us from everlasting death and damnation. If Erasmus Roterodamus remained in this art, so were he a man; but, in that he will be wise in every matter, he much deceiveth himself. It is said, *Whoso will be wise in God, the same must be a fool to the world;* this Erasmus considered not, he will have a finger in every man's dish. Erasmus can do nothing but cavil and flout, he cannot confute. If I were a Papist, so would I easily overcome

[11] Luther's *Colloquia Mensalia,* p. 164. Bell's translation, London, 1652.
[12] He is here alluding to the *Iulius exclusus.* See p. 70.

and beat him. For, although he flouteth the Pope's ceremonies, yet he hath neither confuted nor overcome him; no enemy is beaten or overcome with mocking, jeering, and flouting.

Then he proceeds to show his personal rancor against Erasmus, and here the judicious reader will suspend his judgment for a while and contrast these two striking characters, each erratic in his own peculiar fashion.

> I hate Erasmus from my heart (saith Luther), for he useth and carrieth even the same argument which Caiaphas advised, when he said, *It is expedient that one man should die for the people.* Even so saith Erasmus and all Epicures, *It is expedient and better that the Gospel should go down, or be not preached, than that all Germany, with all the Princes, should go together by the ears, and that all Christendom should be moved.* Saint John the Evangelist, by reason of this advice, became an utter enemy to Caiaphas. In like manner, Christ gave Caiaphas such a blow, as (I feel) everlastingly he will feel, when he said to Pilate, *He that delivereth me unto thee, the same hath the greater sin,* etc.[13]

Aurifaber, who tells us of these Table-Talks of Luther, then goes on to say that Luther, with great and earnest zeal of heart, said to Doctor Jonas and to Pommer:

> I charge you in my will and testament, that you hate and loathe Erasmus, that viper. I regard not his words, indeed they are well adorned, but they are merely Democritical, Epicurean things, for he speaketh of every matter doubtfully with diligence and of set purpose; his words are wavering, or, as we used to say, screwed words which he may construe as he pleaseth, which beseemeth not a Christian; yes, such equivocating words beseem no honest human creature. For behold what poison he spitteth out in his *Colloquies* under feigned persons, and finely applieth himself according to the humor of the young, thereby to infect them. So soon it shall please God to help me on my legs again, so will I write against him and cut his throat; I will put on and use against him the sentence of Isaiah concerning the eggs of the Basilisk, the same are fitly dressed for Erasmus' teeth.[14]

Aurifaber goes on with his reminiscences and tells us that on the first day of April, 1526, Luther, lying sick in bed, spent almost the whole day in reading Erasmus' preface to his *New Testament,* and being much moved thereat, said:

> Although this snake be slippery, so that we cannot well fasten on him, yet nevertheless, we and our church will condemn him with his writings and books; and although many worldly wise people

[13] Luther, *Colloquia Mensalia,* pp. 431-2.

[14] We assume that Luther is referring here to Isaiah lix. 5: *"They have broken the eggs of asps, and have woven the webs of spiders; he who shall eat of their eggs shall die, and that which is hatched shall break out into a basilisk."*

will thereat be displeased with us and offended, yet it is better for us to leave them than to deny Christ our Savior. Erasmus has made very base and lazy prefaces, however he softened them; for in a manner he made no difference between Christ and Solon the Wise, a heathen lawyer. Afterwards also he contemned St. Paul and St. John, as his preface on the *Epistle to the Romans* and *John* witnesseth, as were the same stark naught, for he saith:—*The Epistle to the Romans was neither pertinent nor qualified for those times, and it is more troublesome and heavy than profitable, etc.* Is not this a fair credit and praise for the master of that book? Fie on thee, thou accursed wretch! Erasmus is a right Momus. He derideth everything, insomuch that his equivocated books may be read of the Turks. For when one thinketh he hath said much, so hath he said nothing at all; and therefore by reason of his screwed words, he can be caught neither by us nor the Papist, except such his wavering and screwed words be abolished, which both in the Holy Scripture and the imperial laws are forbidden; for they run thus:—*Whoso useth doubtful dark, uncertain words, the same shall be construed and understood against him that speaketh them.*[15]

Luther was particularly bitter against Erasmus' *Catechism,* better known as the *Explanatio symboli apostolorum,* which was published in 1532, but since nowadays it seems to us harmless enough, it is hard to see why. It was divided into six parts, of which the main one treats of heresies and heretics. Heresy he defined as an obstinate contradiction of a truth already decided by the Church. To call into question what is the belief of the Church, but which has not been formally defined as such, he declares to be simply error. His definitions leave much to be desired, but they are not intrinsically vicious as Luther considered them. But hear what Luther said about the book:

. . . But among all his clipped darts I can endure none less than his *Catechism,* wherein he teacheth nothing certain; he only maketh young people to err and despair. His chief doctrine is, we must carry ourselves according to the time, and, as the proverb goeth, we must hang the cloak according to the wind. He only looked to himself, and to have good and easy days, and so he died like an Epicure, without any one servant or comfort of God. This do I leave behind me in my will and testament, whereunto I call you for witnesses. I hold Erasmus Roterodamus for Christ's most bitter enemy. In his *Catechism* is not one word that saith, *Do this,* or *Do not this;* he only therein maketh the consciences to err. . . . Erasmus is an enemy to true religion, a particular adversary and enemy of Christ, a complete picture and image of an Epicure, and of Lucian.[16]

His final opinion of the picture of Erasmus which had been offered for his inspection has a certain grim whimsicality characteristic of the

[15] Luther, *Colloquia Mensalia,* pp. 432-3. [16] *Ibid.,* p. 433.

Wittemberg reformer, especially when quoted in the quaint German of Luther's day, and rendered by Bell in the equally quaint English of the Stuart era: "Look I like this picture?" said Luther. "So am I the greatest knave that liveth." [17]

This was a terrible arraignment that Luther left of Erasmus, part of which he certainly had merited, but not all by any means. For instance, Luther calls him an Epicurean.[18] Although it is true that Erasmus enjoyed living comfortably, and was particular about his wines, he was no sybarite. As for his constant desire to be free and unshackled, that is a very common instinct in us all. The inner motives which governed the actions of Erasmus were revealed to only one or two of his contemporaries, like Goclen, for instance; but to the world at large, including Luther, they were a sealed volume. Luther hits him off very well when he calls him "a crafty and subtle man," and calls attention to his "scoffing spirit," saying that "he can do nothing but cavil and flout; he cannot confute." Perhaps the most remarkable part of Luther's diatribe is his criticism of that one of Erasmus' *Colloquies* called the *Religious Pilgrimage,* where Erasmus ridicules pilgrimages in general as being of no service whatsoever to him who makes them, and that they are nothing but a bundle of superstitions.[19] Luther accuses him "of deriding and flouting all religion," under the guise of casting ridicule on these pious customs of our ancestors, and shows where the logic of Erasmus is faulty. Luther scores heavily against him in this matter; but it is rather surprising to behold Luther defending, while Erasmus is ridiculing, the underlying principle of religious pilgrimages; from which may be deduced the conclusion that Luther understood much better than Erasmus the psychology of the common people. Luther perceived the danger to the young that lurks in the *Colloquies,* and did not hesitate to call their influence insidious at a time when almost all others of his contemporaries could see only their witty flavor. So, too, when he says that Erasmus "speaketh of every matter doubtfully, . . . of set purpose, his words are wavering or screwed words which he may construe as he pleaseth," we feel we are justified in some of the strictures that we have already made on this same characteristic. With all his abnormality, Luther could well estimate the harm that the *Praise of Folly,* the *Iulius exclusus,* and the *Colloquies,* were calculated to occasion to the young and unthinking; and there is no doubt that when Erasmus wrote the former two his journey to Rome

[17] *Idem.*

[18] Epicurus, as the reader is aware, is alleged to have taught that pleasure is the only possible end of rational action, and that the ultimate pleasure is freedom. Democritus furnished him with his atomistic theory, to which he added himself the doctrine of chance.

[19] Part of the topics treated in this colloquy are: Ogygius, going on a pilgrimage to St. James of Compostella, returns full of superstition. As people began to be more cold towards the saints, the Blessed Virgin writes an epistle full of complaints thereon. Then he gives instances of the extravagant beliefs of some of the pilgrims, and recounts what takes place on a pilgrimage to the tomb of St. Thomas of Canterbury, wherein he dwells on the custom of kissing the relics of the saints, and reprehends it sharply.

had made his previously lukewarm and materialistic, if not actually Epicurean tendencies, to become cold, selfish, and measurably egotistic. When he wrote on subjects unconnected with religion, as in his editions of the classics, Erasmus was at his best and was excelled by none; but, when his topics were related to religion, then the personal element rushed in impulsively and with disastrous effects for himself and others. This too was perceived by Luther when he said: "If Erasmus Roterdamus remained in his art, so were he a man; but in that he will be wise in every matter, he much deceiveth himself."

Theodore Beza, who as a young student of seventeen had written the admiring couplet quoted on a previous page, seems in his more mature years to have arrived at Luther's estimate of Erasmus; for in 1557 he accused him of having been at heart an Arian, which was about as bad a thing as one could say concerning his orthodoxy. As far as we have been able to judge, his accusation was not true, and can only be explained on the supposition that he may have been misled by what Luther stigmatized as "screwed and wavering words." Beza's charge came to the ears of Erasmus' friends Froben, Amerbach, and Episcopius. It was reported that he had made it publicly in the company of Farel at an inn, and that at the same time Farel had chosen this occasion to blacken the memory of Erasmus by calling him the worst of men, a most base, wicked, vicious and impure scoundrel. These loyal comrades rallied to the defense of their departed friend, and demanded a retraction from the offenders, failing which they would have recourse to the civil authorities for satisfaction.[20] There had been bad feeling existing between Erasmus and Farel for many years past, but it does not appear that there was much chivalry in the composition of Farel to thus so grossly assail the private character of the dead writer.

Perhaps one of the fairest critiques of Erasmus is that of Roland Desmarets, who says of him:

> Among the recent writers who have distinguished themselves, no one, in my opinion, has excelled Erasmus, whether you regard his judgment, his learning, or his eloquence; and I would not hesitate to compare him with any of the ancients. Had he not spent his whole life in conflict with certain theologians and monks, he would have been able to give to the world even better works than those he has published; and had he not been so caustic, or so pertinacious in advancing certain views, there would have been nothing left in that great man for this age to desire.[21]

Baillet made some selections from the writings of those who had commented favorably or unfavorably on Erasmus, and we shall give one or two of these extracts as we find them in Jortin:

> None would acknowledge him as a person of their communion,

[20] See Wetstein's *Prolegomena to the New Testament*, p. 129.

[21] *Epist. Philologicæ*, Leipzig, 1686, as quoted in Jortin, *Erasmus*, Vol. II, p. 144.

> as Verheiden testifies, though a Protestant. . . . Therefore Bellarmin placeth him amongst the half-christians, Possevin and Salmero say that he ought not to be reckoned amongst the children of the Romish church, and several Catholics have treated him as a lover of novelties. . . . On the other hand the Protestants disown him, and either give him to us, or range him among the doubters. . . . But it is not so easy to excuse in Erasmus that excessive liberty which he assumed of delivering his sentiments concerning ecclesiastical discipline, and of censuring all the abuses and disorders with which he supposed it to be infected, as if he would have set himself up for the Aristarchus of the age.[22]

Never was a man so praised, and never was a man so blamed. We must not omit, in speaking of the epitaphs which were made on him, the one perhaps most famous of all, but which, since it loses its force when translated, we are compelled to give in Latin:

> Hic iacet Erasmus, qui bonus erat mus;
> rodere qui solitus, roditur a vermibus.

While most of these epitaphs serve only to show the skill and ingenuity of their writers, this one causes us to ponder whether it did not contain even more of truth than of wit. In any case, they are proofs of the remarkable fame that Erasmus had acquired for himself; so that even kings were proud to own a specimen of his handwriting. The city of Rotterdam felt honored that Erasmus had called himself Erasmus Roterodamus, and sought out his birthplace, where ultimately his statue was erected. But unfortunately the dissensions which he had created did not rest in the grave with him, but continued to furnish further subject for dispute. For this first statue, which was made of wood, one of granite was substituted in 1557. Holland was at this time in the throes of the religious war which raged there for so many years, and Rotterdam came in for its share of the general disturbance. The Spanish garrison at Rotterdam, undoubtedly Catholic to a man, allowed itself to be led by the exhortations of a violent and injudicious monk to throw the statue of the great writer into the river; and it was not until 1622 that a bronze one took its place. This time it was not disturbed until 1672, at which time the Protestant clergy seem to have been the offenders. The occasion was a sort of mutiny of the inhabitants, during which period of anarchy some of the Protestant clergy represented that there were simple persons among the citizens who were in the habit of kneeling before this statue as one would before that of a saint, and that it might lead to scandal if some of the weaker brethren yielded to a desire to invoke the saints. While it was being deliberated what was best to do under the circumstances, some of the city officials took possession of it and carried it off to a safe place. The citizens of Basle, hearing of these events, thought it would be a good opportunity to get the statue for their own town, in which he had died, and had almost secured the purchase of it when the Rotterdamers returned to their

[22] *Erasmus,* Vol. II, pp. 156-7.

senses, and the statue was restored to its pedestal. This proceeding is in some sort emblematic of Erasmus' whole life and career. He was a storm centre at all times, sometimes in favor, at others in disgrace. However, the two cities of Rotterdam and Basle rest content in the knowledge that he was worthy of honor, either because of, or in spite of, his faults, depending entirely on the point of view; and this is still the divided verdict of the world.

CHAPTER XXVII

CHARACTER AND INFLUENCE

Thus far we have had to deal with the facts and activities of the life of Erasmus, concerning which there is very little difference of opinion; then followed a study of his character as far as it is possible to see it manifested in his writings and correspondence, taking also into account in this connection what light his friends and his enemies have left us on the matter, and using our own deductions to qualify their differing opinions. Now we approach the more difficult task of appraising the influence which he has exerted on his own and succeeding generations. As we have said so often, he was by nature intensely impressionable, morbidly sensitive, and physically timid. These three qualities are most important to be borne in mind in order to secure a proper understanding of his influence or the lack of it, for they explain at once his susceptibility to the influence of others, his abnormal reaction to criticism, and his many failures to rise to the necessities of the occasion.

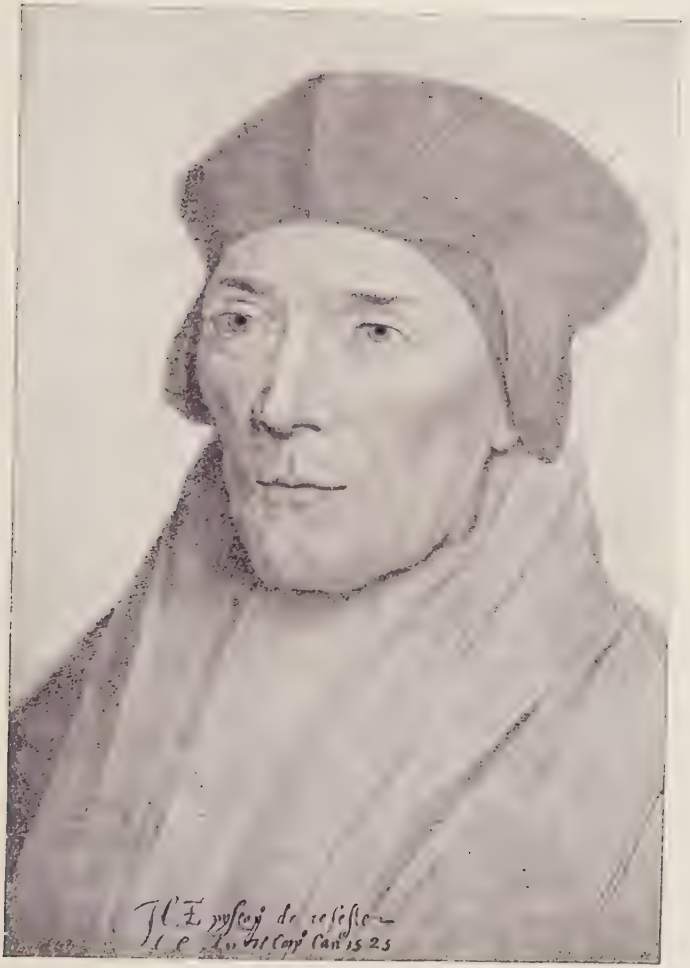
In many ways his susceptibility to the influence of others was a fortunate thing for him, for it is very evident that he was more influenced by his English friends, who were his earliest, by the way, than they by him. And the true answer to the question so often asked, Why did not Erasmus go over to Luther? is that the influence of Colet, More, Tunstall, Fisher, and the rest of them was too potent and permanent with him, and, if not the only factor, was the main factor at least in preventing him from taking that momentous step. No doubt they agreed with him that there were abuses in the Church concerning the scandalous lives of some of the clergy that ought to be corrected; but they also seem to have impressed him definitely and finally with the fact that they believed firmly and absolutely what the Church taught and held as the deposit of truth left by Jesus Christ. Many times during his life signs of wavering may be observed in this latter regard; but we feel that the remembrance of his English friends was always the North Star by which he eventually oriented himself.

Now what influence in return did he exercise over England? The stimulation of an ardor for learning: that principally. Not by any means that there was no love for learning in that country previous to his advent, but that he strengthened and revivified it both by word and example during his many visits there, that he held learned converse with its scholars, and that he aroused in them the spirit of emulation and achievement. And, passing from England to the Continent, we find the same is true in varying measure. His great contribution to the Renaissance, in addition to his own tremendous literary output, was this very

spirit of emulation, friendly rivalry, and encouragement, which he excited in all who would devote their time and their talent to the New Learning. And that this is so is proved by the fact that scarcely any writer of his day ventured to issue a work without applying to Erasmus for advice or suggestion, receiving thankfully, like Sadoleti for instance, what the great writer might give of his superior wisdom or experience.

In France his earliest influence was exerted by his *Adages,* which first attracted to him the notice of French scholars, five of the earliest editions being printed in that country before it made its appearance elsewhere. Of the *Colloquies,* however, the same cannot be said, since out of the first forty-six editions only one bears a French imprint. Similarly the *Enchiridion* did not meet with a cordial reception, thirty-six editions appearing elsewhere before the first one appeared in France. Of the *Institutio principis christiani* there was only one French edition out of the first twenty-two printed. The *Moriæ encomium* was fairly popular in France, as we find many editions published there. This is one of the books with which Erasmus was not very anxious to have his name associated. He saw too late that it contained too much of the spirit that afterwards gave birth to the ribaldries of Rabelais and Voltaire, and by common consent of the world these two French writers are held up as his legitimate offspring. Other writers have their masterpieces, the result of much midnight oil and toilsome labor. Erasmus pinned his faith on his version of the New Testament and the Works of St. Jerome as the two which were to immortalize him eternally, but, by the irony of fate, it was two of his minor works, which he penned in an idle hour and for the amusement of friends, which were destined to hand down his name to posterity, and against his will.

In Germany, and that part of Switzerland where the German language is spoken, we naturally find his influence, both for good and evil, most evident. There is not the slightest doubt that had Erasmus had the courage to go over to Luther he would have carried with him the greater part of the scholars of Germany at least. Almost all his books found their greatest number of readers in Germany and the adjoining territories where that language was current; and when Luther broke away from the Church the first question on every lip was, "What does Erasmus think?" His myriad readers had imbibed from his *Colloquies* and the *Moria* that spirit of levity which is always disastrous when applied to matters connected with religion. He had spoken lightly of what they had always been taught to regard as most sacred and when they began to do the same on his authority he was dismayed at the result. The doubts that he had instilled into his readers had obfuscated their judgment and when they saw Luther pressing these matters to a logical conclusion they decided naturally that Erasmus was at heart a Lutheran. Such a result was unavoidable, and at times Erasmus shrieked aloud in impotent anger when he recognized the harm he had done and his inability to undo it. So his action in refusing to pass over to Luther was a personal and negative good, while his work in



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unhinging the settled beliefs of his readers was an objective and positive evil. Pastor puts it very succinctly and justly when he says:

> In spite of all the services he rendered to classical study, it must be admitted that, though he never separated himself openly from the Church, Erasmus did much by his attacks, not only on degenerate scholasticism but on scholasticism itself, as well as by his venomous irony, to lessen respect for the authority of the Church and for faith itself among a large number of the highly cultivated men of the day. Thus did he prepare the way for the impetuous and impassioned Luther.[1]

And, although Erasmus was in a measure doing the work of Luther in thus weakening the influence of the Catholic Church by his insidious attacks, the strange part of it is that Luther gave him no thanks for it, fearing that not religion would be served, but rather infidelity, as was the case then, and is to-day. We may reasonably assume that had there been no Erasmus to precede Luther there would have been no Luther to follow Erasmus. Not Sebastian Brant, with his *Narrenschiff,* and his coadjutors Locher, Bade, Watson, and Barclay, could have ever sufficed to bring the Church into disrepute; it required a greater than they; and, even if Erasmus himself succeeded, it was only partially, as after events proved. Let us differentiate, if it be possible, the instances among the German scholars where his influence was good and where it was otherwise. To his good example in remaining within the communion of the Church we may certainly credit him with the loyalty of Beatus Rhenanus, Julius Pflug, Zasius, Louis Ber, Botzheim, Glareanus, Pirckheimer, and others; but, when we read the correspondence that passed between him and Paul Voltz, Capito, Camerarius, Helius Eobanus, Pellicanus, Spalatin, Leo Jud,[2] and even the Elector of Saxony, we are compelled to the conclusion that his public utterances had so weakened the faith of these latter that his example was not sufficient to prevent them from falling under the more potent influence of Luther.

Passing on to his own Netherlands we find the same condition of affairs to exist. Gerard Geldenhauer had passed over to the Lutherans, and he took more than one occasion to remind Erasmus how he had said the very things during the time of their former friendship that he censured in Geldenhauer now. That there were not more like Geldenhauer among the Dutch and Brabanters was probably due more to the influence of the two neighboring Universities of Louvain and Cologne than to any restraint that Erasmus might have exercised over his fellow-countrymen. Be this as it may, we are in a position to adduce practically contemporaneous Dutch testimony, both as to his standing and to the sort of influence he had exercised over his compatriots. In Geldenhauer's native town of Nimeguen there was living at the time of Erasmus' death a youth by the name of Peter de Hondt,

[1] *History of the Popes,* Vol. VII, p. 315. Kerr's translation.
[2] Both Spalatin and Leo Jud had translated part of his works into German.

better known to the world of scholars by his Latin name of Canisius. In his mature years he wrote this thoughtful judgment of his great fellow-countryman Erasmus, and we may fairly assume that it represented the current Dutch opinion of him.[3]

> It is undeniable that he [Erasmus] had a graceful and pleasing genius, a remarkable knowledge of the Greek and Latin tongues, a comprehensive erudition, a wonderful facility and fluency in writing, together with an eloquence that was rare and admirable in those days. However, although his energy and skill in stimulating the study of learning and rescuing it from barbarism have conferred great profit on many; yet on the other hand, to speak candidly, in matters related to the Christian religion and those of a theological aspect, he has been a source of great trouble both to himself and others. For the same excessive liberty he himself has taken he has taught others to take in criticizing the writings of the Fathers, the constitutions of the Church, the decisions of the theologians, the public ceremonies, nay, more, in attacking and censuring them. . . . And yet it must be allowed if we wish to judge sincerely, that there is the greatest difference between Erasmus and Luther. He always retained the name of Catholic, while Luther stood forth not only as a manifest deserter of the Catholic Church, but also as its undutiful assailer, and the leader of many sects. Erasmus attacked religion more by craft than by force, as Orosius said of Julian [the Apostate], often exhibiting great caution and moderation both in his opinions and his errors; but Luther, by nature vehement, turbulent, ardent, factious, exceeded all bounds and rushed headlong to extremes, so arrogant that he would yield to no one, so harsh and pertinacious in his judgments that he was often unbearable even to his own friends, and, finally, so inflamed with hatred of the Church that he made the most furious and forcible efforts for its destruction. Erasmus set himself up as judge of what in the doctrine of theologians and the Church he considered should be condemned and what should be corrected; and, whether wittingly or unwittingly, he so played the part of Momus [4] that he opened a mighty window for Luther and others to revolutionize all religion, and to arouse those tumults which we now see to have brought about the greatest calamity in the Christian world, and which we are unable to sufficiently deplore. Hence it has begun to be a common saying that "Where Erasmus gives the word, whether in joke or in earnest, Luther rushes in, and the eggs which the former has laid the latter has hatched." This is certainly evident, that the theological writings of Erasmus, many of which he himself has published, could not to-day, and ought not anywhere, to be defended, since the censure of the Church, which is and should be authoritative in the highest degree with the orthodox, has forbidden the writings of Erasmus to be read, except a few, and this for the weightiest reasons; and, although it has not condemned the author

[3] He has recently been canonized under the title of St. Peter Canisius.
[4] The god of ridicule.

himself, yet it has censured his works as being harmful rather than profitable to their readers.[8]

Vossius too, who spent his life as a professor at Dort, Leyden, and Amsterdam, while giving all due praise to Erasmus for his achievements in literature and patristic history, intimates nevertheless that he was not always ready to take an oath on his judgment. It is to his numerous errors of judgment that the Dutch, in common with the rest of the world, took exception; the perusal of his works left behind a feeling of doubt which the splendor of his name served only to augment. While properly proud of the classical achievements of their great countryman, the Dutch have never been blind to his failings; and we make no doubt that even to-day they will readily subscribe and agree with the admission of LeClerc made in the preface to his monumental work on Erasmus:

> I will not say that Erasmus has always seemed to me to have been correct in his judgments, for I have held him to be human and not divine. I will not attempt either to defend everything he has done; nor, had I lived in those days, and feel as I do now, would I have followed his advice in everything.

Now, in order to realize fully the immense influence which Erasmus exercised over Europe, both during his lifetime and after his death, and especially to observe where the greatest as well as the least amount of that influence was exerted, it will be necessary to make a minute investigation of his works as to scope and distribution. His personal influence, great though it was at times, was obviously limited and naturally ceased at his death, while his works continued to spread his fame, and in some degree his influence, for many generations after his demise.

The number of editions of his various works, or selections therefrom, added to his many editions of the classic authors with their translations, may easily amount to five thousand. Making a rough estimate of five hundred copies to each edition would give us in round numbers two million five hundred thousand copies. This estimate is possibly too large, and as it is impossible to ascertain the exact size of each edition let us estimate the grand total at two million copies. This stupendous output gives us but a bald idea of the influence which he exerted on the world by his books, and it will be necessary to go into further detail for a better understanding. The first thing that strikes the eye is that the greater part of his works were essentially school-books and books for scholars, and were written for that purpose. In other words, they were intended for textbooks, and their aim and purpose was educational. In view then of the vast influence he exerted by his textbooks, we may fitly call him the Schoolmaster of Europe. Of this class of works fully twenty-four hundred editions were published, or possibly one million copies, and hence we may fairly assume that these books were in the hands of nearly every tyro and scholar in Europe. What the influence of the schoolmaster has always been need not delay us here, but a few tables may be profitably studied.

[8] Canisius, *De corruptela verbi,* Lib. V, chap. x.

TITLES	NUMBER OF EDITIONS
Cato pro pueris	7
Ciuilitate (de) morum puerilium	131
Colloquia	247
Concio de puero Iesu (written for John Colet's school)	48
Conficiendarum epistolarum formula	26
Conscribendis (de) epistolis	103
Constructione (de) octo partium orationis	99
Dialogus de Latini Græcique pronuntiatione	21
Duplici (de) copia verborum ac rerum	139
Lingua	43
Parabolæ siue Similia	64
Paraphrasis in Elegantias Laurentii Vallæ	51
Pueris (de) liberaliter instituendis	21
Ratione (de) studii et legendi	88
Theodore Gaza's Grammar (from Greek to Latin)	18
	1106

Then we have his editions of the classics for more advanced scholars:

TITLES	NUMBER OF EDITIONS
Æsop	86
Aristotle	4
Arnobius	7
Ausonius	26
Cato's Distichs	112
Cicero's Various Works	119
Curtius	11
Euripides (various translations)	26
Galen (various translations)	17
Historiæ Augustæ scriptores	9
Horace	12
Isocrates (various translations)	38
Josephus (edited by Erasmus)	17
Lactantius (edited by Erasmus)	14
Libanius the Sophist (translated from Greek)	12
Livy (edited by Erasmus)	8
Lucian (various works translated from Greek)	50
Ovid. In Nucem	26
Pliny	6
Plutarch (various works from the Greek)	48
Prudentius	16
Publius Syrus	59
Seneca (various works)	43
Suetonius (various works)	46
Terence	42
	854

To these may be added the following works for scholars:

TITLES	NUMBER OF EDITIONS
Adages (complete or in Epitome)	174
Apophthegmata	103
Dialogus Ciceronianus	20
Epigrammata	14
Ode de senectutis incommodis	12
Antibarbari	14
	337

Then he wrote essays on special subjects such as:

TITLES	NUMBER OF EDITIONS
On War (Dulce bellum inexpertis)	35
Querela pacis	36
Scarabeus	5
Sileni Alcibiades	16
Encomium medicinæ	18
Panegyricus ad Philippum Austriæ Ducem	14
(Some of these were amplifications from the Adages.)	124

Turning our attention now from his educational works of a strictly secular type, we have to note a number of books of a religious type which he wrote to serve as handbooks of Catholic instruction and devotion. Under this heading we may include:

TITLES	NUMBER OF EDITIONS
De contemptu mundi	31
De immensa Dei misericordia	36
Expostulatio Iesu cum homine	22
Modus orandi Deum	25
Oratio de virtute amplectenda	19
Præparatio ad mortem	57
Precatio dominica	35
Precatio ad Iesum pro pace ecclesiæ	21
Virginis et martyri comparatio	18
	264

Then more particularly for the cleric than for the layman he wrote:

TITLES	NUMBER OF EDITIONS
Ecclesiastes	15
Enchiridion	121
Encomium matrimonii	20
Esu carnium (de)	23
Exomologesis	16
Explanatio symboli Apostolorum, seu Catechismus	23
Institutio principis christiani	43
Institutum hominis christiani	45

TITLES	NUMBER OF EDITIONS
Morte (de) declamatio	21
Paraclesis	64
Paraphrasis in Acta Apostolorum	13
Paraphrasis in Epistolas Pauli	55
Paraphrasis in Epistolas Apostolorum, seu Canonicas	15
Paraphrasis in Euangelium secundum Ioannem	12
Paraphrasis in Euangelium Lucæ	13
Paraphrasis in Euangelium Marci	13
Paraphrasis in Euangelium Matthaei	44
Psalmi	37
Puritate tabernaculi (de)	14
Ratio veræ theologiæ	34
Sarcienda ecclesiæ concordia (de)	26
	667

We may place in a special category his editions of the New Testament and the annotations on the same with his editions of the Fathers:

TITLES	NUMBER OF EDITIONS
Nouum Testamentum	293
St. Ambrose (various works)	18
St. Athanasius (various works)	11
St. Augustine (various works)	10
St. Basil (various works)	28
St. Cyprian (various works)	20
St. Jerome (various works)	33
St. Hilary (Lucubrationes)	6
St. Irenæus (all)	11
St. John Chrysostom (various works)	32
	462

As his only professedly theological works we have:

TITLES	NUMBER OF EDITIONS
De libero arbitrio	22
Hyperaspistes	12
	34

In a class by itself, which might be called the satirical, we have the

TITLE	NUMBER OF EDITIONS
Moriæ encomium, seu Stultitiæ laus, or Praise of Folly	204

Of his various Apologies against several persons we have:

TITLE	NUMBER OF EDITIONS
Apologiæ	60

There are, besides all these, a multitude of other writings which are of lesser importance.

Now, if we may judge of the influence which Erasmus exerted on each country by the number of his works printed in that country, then England was less influenced by him than any other of the principal nations of that time. The first edition of the *Adages* was printed in 1500, but it was not until 1539 that the work was printed in England, and only seven editions have been printed there at any time. Compare this with the number of editions printed in France, 40; in the Low Countries, 30; on the various presses at Basle, 32; and in the rest of Germany, 48; while even in Italy 10 editions appeared. Out of the 131 editions of the *De ciuilitate morum puerilium* only four were English, those of Robert Whittington, made for his grammar school, and with the Latin and English side by side. Compare this with 28 editions for the Low Countries, 23 for France, and 43 for the German-speaking countries. Let us try one of his most popular works in the same manner, this time the *Colloquies*. Of the 247 editions issued the first to appear in England was from the press of Wynkyn de Worde in 1519, followed by others in 1525, 1535, and then a long hiatus until 1602. In all, the editions appearing in England, Scotland, and Ireland, were 17, compared to 34 for France, 74 for the Low Countries, 95 for the German speaking countries, and 7 for Italy. Of selections from the *Colloquies* consisting of one or more colloquies to an edition there were printed in all countries 150 editions. Of these England printed 29, France 25, Low Countries 21, German-speaking countries 20.[6] Let us now consider the famous *Moriæ encomium,* better known as the *Praise of Folly*. There were 204 editions printed in all countries. We note it here for the consideration of the reader that no edition of this book was printed in England during the lifetime of Sir Thomas More to whom the work was dedicated. In other words, while England was Catholic she did not favorably regard this much heralded work. It was only in 1549, after More, Colet, and even Erasmus himself were long dead, that the first English edition was brought out, in the vernacular, by Sir Thomas Chaloner, Queen Elizabeth's ambassador to Germany. Only 19 editions altogether have been printed in England, while in France we have 26, in the Low Countries 62, many of which were printed in French during the time that it was forbidden by the authorities to print this work in that realm, and were undoubtedly intended for French consumption; 69 in the German-speaking countries, and 15 in Italy.

The *Enchiridion* ran through 121 editions, 15 of which were printed in England, and all of them in the vernacular. The first was printed by Wynkyn de Worde, although the title-page says Basle, 1518. There were no other editions printed in England until the one attributed to William Tyndale appeared in 1533. As against these 15 editions for England, we have 33 for the Low Countries, 40 for the German-speaking countries, and 12 for France, of which at least three were printed outside that country and brought in surreptitiously. Spain now first

[6] These figures are up to 1850 only.

showed interest in Erasmus by translating this book and issuing six editions from 1527 onward. There seem to have been issued no editions of the work in England from 1576 until 1752, an interval of 176 years, indicating that the work had lost what popularity it had ever had there.

We shall run over his lesser works very cursorily, and, without comparing the number of editions printed in each country, which each reader who wishes can easily do for himself by consulting the *Bibliotheca Erasmiana* as we have here done, we shall simply note the whole number of editions printed, and then show how many of them were printed in England.

TITLES	TOTAL EDITIONS	EDITIONS PRINTED IN ENGLAND
Conficiendarum epistolarum formula	26	0
Conscribendis (de) epistolis	103	2
Constructione (de) octo partium orationis	99	28
Contemptu (de) mundi	31	0
Duplici (de) copia verborum ac rerum	139	6
Dialogus Ciceronianus	20	1
Dialogus de recta Latini Græcique sermonis pronuntiatione	21	0
Ecclesiastes	21	2
Encomium matrimonii	20	1
Encomium medicinæ	20	1
Exomologesis	16	1
Explanatio symboli apostolorum	23	3
Immensa (de) Dei misericordia	36	5
Institutio principis christiani	43	0
Institutum hominis christiani	45	3
Liber de sarcienda ecclesiæ concordia	26	0
Lingua	43	0
Modus orandi Deum	25	0
Morte (de) declamatio	21	2
Oratio de virtute amplectenda	19	0
Parabolæ siue Similia	64	1
Paraclesis	64	2
Paraphrases (all included together)	165	1
Paraphrasis in Elegantias Laurentii Vallæ	51	0
Precatio dominica	35	2
Precatio pro pace ecclesiæ	21	0
Psalmi	37	0
Pueris (de) liberaliter instituendis	21	2
Querela pacis	36	0
Ratio veræ theologiæ	34	0
Ratione (de) studii et legendi	88	0
	1413	63

The list is too long for further treatment along these lines, but we must not close without showing the influence of Erasmus' *New Testament* and his *De libero arbitrio* on England, as far as the number of editions can show it.

Of the *New Testament* only five editions have appeared in England, 27 in the Low Countries, 25 in France, 206 in the German-speaking countries, these numbers including all editions of the *Annotations* and a few epitomes that were issued.

Of the *De libero arbitrio* only 22 editions were printed altogether, of which none in England. Of its sequel, the *Hyperaspistes,* only 12 editions were printed, of which none appeared in England. The *Hyperaspistes,* like almost all of Erasmus' apologetical and controversial works, died with him. As for the *De libero arbitrio,* it was not reprinted for nearly a hundred years after the edition of 1526, except that the Frobens included it in their edition of his complete works in 1540.

One more method of comparing the influence of Erasmus on the various nations remains to be demonstrated. The editions issued in the original Latin could be read by scholars everywhere, so that it is only the appearance of editions in the vernacular which will show how early, and, in a measure, to what extent the attention of the multitude was directed to Erasmus. The *Moriæ encomium* was translated into German in 1520, and into French the same year. Italy issued its first translation of the work in 1539, and another in 1544; it was only in 1549 that the first English edition appeared. The *Adagia,* on the contrary, exercised a strong attraction on the English, for their first edition of the work appeared in 1539 in the quaint vernacular of Richard Taverner, with a second edition the same year, a third edition in 1545, and a fourth edition in 1552. Strange as it may appear, no other nation had produced a translation of this work previous to 1873, except Italy, which issued an Italian version by Lelio Carani in 1550. Of the *Colloquies,* the first country to issue it in the vernacular was Spain in 1529, and she followed this with a second edition the subsequent year. Germany issued an edition in German and Latin in 1545, while Italy followed with one in the same year of 1545, and a second edition in 1549, both in Italian. The Low Countries produced a Flemish translation in 1559, and a Dutch one in 1610. It was not until 1671 that England sent out her first translation. Of the *De ciuilitate morum,* the first translation in any language was in English in 1532, by Robert Whittington, who entitled his work *A Lytle booke of good Maners for Chyldren.* A German translation followed in 1536, a French one in 1537, a Bohemian in the same year, and a Dutch in 1559. Of the *Apophthegmata* the first translation appeared in France in 1539, the first English one in 1540, the first Italian one in 1546, the first Spanish one in 1549; none in German, and none in Dutch until 1672. Of the *New Testament* the first German translation appeared in 1523, in Dutch in 1525, in Bohemian in 1538, in English the same year, in Italian in 1545, in Polish in 1552, and in French not until 1554. Of

the *Enchiridion* the first translation appeared in English in 1518, in Bohemian in 1519, in German in 1520, in Dutch in 1523, in Spanish in 1527, in French in 1529, and in Italian in 1542.

Hence we may conclude that the English preferred the *Adagia* to the *Moriæ encomium,* the *Ciuilitate* to the *Colloquies,* the *Enchiridion* to the *New Testament,* if judged by their eagerness to read Erasmus' works in translations. To sum up on this same basis for the other nations, as compared with the English in this regard, we find as follows:

Translations of the *Moriæ encomium:* German 16, French 40, Dutch 31, Italian 8, Swedish 1, Spanish 1, English 9.

From these figures we may assume that the French, Dutch, and German peoples were most influenced by the *Moriæ encomium,* the Italians and English much less so, and the Swedish and Spaniards little if at all.

Translations of the *Adagia* previous to 1873: English 6, Italian 1, all others 0.

Since this was a work for scholars alone, who could of course read Latin, the figures above show little more than that some of the English scholars had a desire to make Erasmus familiar to their fellow-countrymen of less fortunate educational attainments—certainly a laudable aim.

Translations of the *Colloquia:* German 8, French 6, Dutch 11, Italian 3, English 3, Spanish 2, Flemish 1.

We may assume that the 213 Latin editions of this work were more or less used for their schoolroom purpose, and that these translations, 34 in number, were issued by admirers of Erasmus to show his merits in the vernacular. Other reasons will occur to him who has read them.

Translations of the *De ciuilitate morum:* German 7, French 6, English 4, Dutch 8, Swedish 2, Bohemian 1, Finnish 1.

This was not only used as a book for the tyro to learn Latin, but also served the purpose of teaching good manners. Hence the translations.

Translations of the *Enchiridion:* German 6, French 8, English 14, Dutch 16, Spanish 4, Bohemian 2, Polish 1, Portuguese 1, Italian 1, Hungarian 1.

Since this was primarily intended as a book of instruction in the duties of religion, we naturally expect to find many editions in the language of the people. As a matter of fact, there are 55 translations to 66 in Latin, and Erasmus' relative influence on the various peoples by this little work is strikingly represented by the figures given above.

Now it will be of interest to consider how long the influence of Erasmus continued to act on the world. Out of the 226 works written by him, as they appear under their respective titles in the *Bibliotheca Erasmiana,* the vast majority of them were never reprinted, but died with him. Of course the Frobens in 1540, and LeClerc in 1703, published his complete works, the latter in ten huge tomes, but we are here concerned only with separate editions which might indicate a more than scholastic or sentimental interest. Of his most scholarly work, the *Adages,* no complete edition has been published since 1670. Of the *Apophthegmata,* which for scholarship must always be quoted with

esteem, no edition appeared from 1767 until more than one hundred years afterwards, when a new edition of Udall's translation appeared in England. Of his famous work *On Freewill* no edition appeared anywhere from 1745 until 1870. Of his deservedly praised work on war, which was amplified from his adage *Dulce bellum inexpertis,* we have frequent editions up to 1813, and extracts from it down to 1856, and this in many languages. Of his *De ciuilitate morum puerilium* numerous editions were published in many languages up to 1877. Of his *De conscribendis epistolis* the last edition was dated 1745. Of his Latin Grammar, or *De constructione octo partium orationis,* we have editions down to 1856. Of his religious work *De contemptu mundi* we have none, with one exception, after 1641. Similarly of his *De copia verborum* we have none after 1690, with two exceptions, in 1715 and 1823. Of another of his devotional works, *De immensa Dei misericordia,* we have no editions after 1667, except two in French, 1712 and 1763 respectively, until the Dutch gave us one in 1862. Of his famous *Ciceronianus* we have no edition after 1643. Of the *Ecclesiastes* we have none after 1554 until 1730, when we have a Latin one in 1730 and an English one in 1797, both printed in England, the only other one being a Latin edition which appeared in Leipzig in 1820. No edition of the *Encomium matrimonii* was issued after 1638. Of his *Epigrammata* there were none issued after 1623. The *Exomologesis* did not appear after 1542. Of his *Catechismus,* or *Explanatio symboli apostolorum,* which Luther so hated, we have no edition after 1730, except the Dutch edition which appeared in 1861. No edition of the *Institutio christiani matrimonii* was issued after 1715. Of the *Institutio principis christiani* we have numerous editions, but none after 1584. Of his *De sarcienda ecclesiæ concordia* the last one appeared in 1690, although in 1824 there was a summary of Erasmus' work issued in French. No edition of the *Lingua* appeared after 1649. Another of his religious works, the *Oratio de virtute amplectenda,* ceased to appear after 1644. The year 1669 saw the last edition of his *Parabolæ,* and 1620 witnessed the ultimate issue of his *Paraclesis,* with the two exceptions of Langius' edition in 1704, and a modern edition in 1820. Of his 12 *Paraphrases* of the Gospels and Epistles, none reached the end of the sixteenth century except the one on St. Mark, the one on St. Matthew, and the one on the Four Gospels, and these three only by one edition each. His little book of devotion called *De præparatione ad mortem* was, on the contrary, much circulated, even as late as 1866. His work *De ratione studii,* etc., seems to have been issued only twice after 1692. His *Spongia,* like all his controversial works of acrid tang, never appeared after his death. The *Ratio veræ theologiæ* was issued only once after 1786.

So we may notice a gradual declension in the amount of influence that the works of Erasmus exerted, laying it down as certain that some of them retained their force and vitality well on to 1650, that a few more continued to be reprinted down to 1750, but that since that time they seem to have lost their sap, or, at least, have ceased to exercise any influence. But although with reference to these works

which we have here mentioned such a verdict may fairly be drawn from the statistics gathered above, the same is by no means true of his *New Testament,* including therewith his *Annotations* and his *Paraphrases* on the same.

Of the 293 editions of this work which have been printed, 229 were issued from 1516 to 1600, 56 from 1601 to 1700, 7 from 1701 to 1800, and 1 from 1800 to 1900. Apparently it was immensely popular. Apart from the intrinsic merits of the work with which we are not here concerned, a reason for its great sale was due to the fact that, although the Council of Trent had ordered that the Vulgate should be used in "public lectures, disputations, sermons, and expositions," the members of that Council were well aware that there was no standard edition of that work, but many more or less defective ones. But it was not until 1593 that the present Vulgate, in the very phraseology we now have it, was finally commended by the Church as the authorized edition of the Scriptures. Up to this time booksellers and printers were at liberty to print and sell any edition without let or hindrance, which is one reason why the edition by Erasmus, and not only his but others', had a large popularity. From the issuance of the Clementine edition of the Vulgate we observe that the Erasmian edition, with here and there a possible exception, was printed in Protestant countries only, with a constantly dwindling circulation, and that at last it entirely vanished. Another reason why Erasmus' edition of the New Testament eventually lost its power to influence succeeding generations was that other men, following in or diverging from his footsteps, produced editions of the New Testament for Protestants which evidently were more to the popular taste; and some of them, like the King James edition in England, for instance, preëmpted and maintained the position which that of Erasmus had so long enjoyed.

And now we must treat of the two books of Erasmus with which his name is most associated, the *Moria* and the *Colloquies.* Of the *Moria* there were 204 editions, of which 59 appeared between 1511 and 1600, 38 from 1601 to 1700, 59 from 1701 to 1800, and 33 from 1801 to 1900, not to take into account 15 which were undated. It is to be especially noticed here that the *Moria* was put on the *Index auctorum et librorum prohibitorum* by the Council of Trent in 1564. From that year until 1751 there was not a single edition printed in any Catholic country; or, to put this remarkable fact in another way, its circulation was practically limited to Protestant countries. So strict was this prohibition that, when in 1713 Gueudeville translated the work into French, he had to have it printed in Leyden. The reason for this great popularity is quite obvious, since, in view of the fact that the work was written by a Catholic who ridiculed the Catholic bishops and monks unmercifully, in the hands of Protestants it served as a terrible weapon to belabor their enemies. This it is, rather than its witty style and its undoubted literary quality, that has served to perpetuate the work; and it will probably continue to fulfill the same function for a long time to come. The same thing may be said of the *Colloquies,* for it was almost one hundred years after its prohibition by the Council of Trent

before an edition appeared in any Catholic country, that of Mercier at Paris in 1656. Of the *Colloquies* there were 247 editions printed, of which 119 were printed from 1516 to 1600, 75 between 1601 and 1700, 29 between 1701 and 1800, and 10 from 1800 to 1878, not taking into account 14 which were printed without date. From 1750 to 1850 there was only one edition printed in France, and that was expurgated.[7]

Hence we may set it down as incontrovertible that the influence of the *Moria* and the *Colloquies* was exerted mostly on Protestant peoples, but whether that influence was good or bad must be left to students of history. All that we are justified in saying here is that any work which serves to perpetuate religious hatreds could not well be deemed a beneficent influence. With regard to their influence on Catholics, the Council of Trent scotched their effect by prohibiting them to be read, and included in this same prohibition the *Lingua,* the *Institutio matrimonii christiani,* the *De interdicto esu carnium,* and the *Paraphrase on St. Matthew* in the Italian version by Bernardo Tomitano. In addition, all his works treating on religious subjects were banned until they had been passed upon and corrected by the Universities of Paris or Louvain. A special exception was made in the case of the *Adages,* provided that the edition of Paulus Manutius was used.[8] But after the works of Erasmus had been thoroughly corrected and expurgated by the faculties of the Universities of Paris and Louvain, a reaction in favor of some of them set in, and we find many writers, including the Jesuits, making copious use of them in combating the sectaries of the Reform.[9] Thus we see the influence of Erasmus infusing the minds of both parties in the internecine strife of the Reformation, since his utterances were such that they furnished an armory of weapons from which both of the contending sides could make equal use. What else could happen to any man who, like Erasmus, advanced his premises and then retreated before their consequences? Such has always been the fate of those who stood out from the masses and sought to substitute their personal opinions and ideals for what ancient authority had hallowed and time made venerable. Either they fail miserably, or their hands are forced and they are compelled to proceed further than they had intended. If, however, they succeed, they attract a number of followers who have neither their vision nor their judgment, but for whose acts they are held, justly or unjustly, responsible. Such was the retribution that visited Erasmus, and a like retribution was exacted of Luther. Whether or not Luther's influence still lives does not here concern us; but as for that of Erasmus we know that it has long ceased to move the minds of men actively. True, the name of Erasmus is a great one to conjure by, for the undiscriminating know not that there were two Erasmuses, the scholar and the controversial-

[7] There was an edition printed at Artois in 1776, but whether this was expurgated or not I cannot say.

[8] "Adagia vero ex editione quam molitur Paulus Manutius permittentur." Preserved Smith, in his *Erasmus,* p. 422, is, according to this quotation, slightly in error when he infers that the *Adages* were entirely prohibited.

[9] See, for instance, J. Gretzer's *De Nouo Euangelio, nouisque euangelistis iudicum Desiderii Erasmii Roterodami.* Ingolstadt, 1610.

ist, and that when invoking the one they are often confusing him with the other. For he of the polemical arena died long ago, even in the lifetime of his contemporaries; but the fame of the scholar will grow dim only with the ages. As a scholar he was perhaps the most wonderful the world has ever known; as a reformer of Church doctrine he has left little trace. Every point of dogma or discipline about which he raised doubts in the minds of men, including confession, *indulgences,* and the Religious Orders, is still flourishing and held in the same firm tenor as ever. This calls up the serious reflection that had the Church been wrong on these doctrines the destructive tactics of Luther would have annihilated her. For success in establishing one's opinions depends less on what they are worth in themselves than on the circumstances and the times in which they are presented, and Luther was fortunate in both. That the ecclesiastical abuses were accordingly corrected and the whole dogma of the Church reiterated and confirmed was due to the action of the entire Church sitting in the Council of Trent; in other words, it was due to authority, which was what Luther and Erasmus lacked.

But we must not leave the name of Erasmus linked with that of Luther, for such propinquity he always dreaded. In taking leave of him we wish to speak kindly of him. We are more apt to relish an account of the failures than of the achievements of humanity, to see it satirized rather than panegyrized. But so few succeed and so many fail that we can perhaps better understand failure than success. Few reputations have been exposed to such perils at the hands of open enemies or imprudent friends as that of Erasmus. It is time that this sort of thing should cease, that his faults should be forgotten and his virtues acknowledged by all, irrespective of religious bias. His heart was saddened when he saw the Church torn by dissensions that to him seemed needless. That he was not the selected instrument to remedy them was not so much his fault as his misfortune: his greatness lay in another direction. It is granted to no man to be great in every way. Aristotle speaks of those who have an agitated soul, and certainly Erasmus was one of these. To all such the discipline incurred by their own errors is perhaps the most salutary. In the sunset of his life he realized his many imperfections and expressed a deep and humble regret for them; and the timidity and insincerity of his middle years disappeared. He was by nature a scholar, not a reformer; but because he wielded a potent pen he was flattered by both parties to use it in their behalf, with the usual result that he pleased neither.

In closing our study of Erasmus we are impressed with the fact that he was as unfortunate in his death as in his life. He had made a valiant effort to spend the last of his days in Catholic surroundings where he might finish his earthly journey in the warm and consoling atmosphere of the old Faith, and where, with all his wavering doubts at rest, he might entrust his soul to God's mercy. But fate overtook him at Basle whence all the clergy had been banished, and he was buried in its cold cathedral whose very altar had been removed and every single vestige eradicated of that Faith which had comforted the hearts

and satisfied the spiritual longings of so many countless generations of Christians. The chill and ungarnished walls of that aged minster still look down on the bare and deserted tomb where for now nearly four hundred years his frail body has been gradually returned to its original dust, surrounded by those who profess what he regarded as an erroneous belief; and, strangest chance of an unkind fate, while they do honor to the fame of the scholar, they deem it a mere relic of ancient superstition to pray for his soul. The people of Basle who knew the circumstances of his death in their midst admired him as a great writer, but rightly held him as a Catholic; while the Catholics of that time, not knowing the facts but seeing him die in a non-Catholic city, wrongly held him as a renegade from the Church. Thus the influences that he might have exerted in any direction after his death were working at cross purposes. As he was in life so was he in death.

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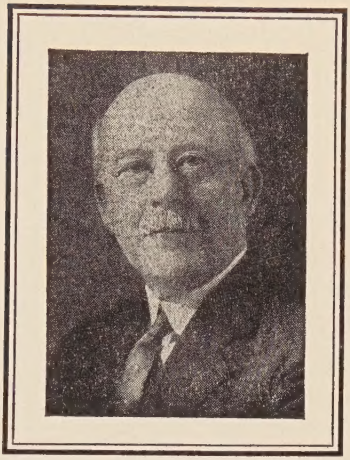

The author was born in Preston, Lancashire, England, and was brought to the United States by his parents in 1870. He obtained his preliminary education in the public schools of Fall River, Massachusetts, and matriculated at Holy Cross College, Worcester, Massachusetts, from which institution he graduated in 1888. In 1896 his *alma mater* granted him the degree of A. M. After several years of business life and study, he entered the Harvard Medical School, graduating in 1904. Since then he has practiced his profession at Lynn, Massachusetts, and incidentally cultivated literature, issuing (in 1905) a life of the Reverend Jeremiah Shepard, and contributing to magazines and reviews. He is a member of the Mediaeval Academy of America and of various medical societies.

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